

SPECIMENS
OF
PREACHING:

BY
Robert Hawker, D.D.

VICAR of CHARLES,

PLYMOUTH.



Plymouth = Dock:

PRINTED BY T. PHILP, BOOKSELLER, AND
BOOKBINDER, BARRACK-STREET.

1801.

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THE Sermons contained in this Volume, are published, as a Specimen of the Author's method of preaching.

The Reader of discernment cannot but discover in the perusal of them, (what indeed the Preacher is anxious above all things should be thoroughly understood) that while insisting upon the great and leading points of the Gospel; of the Father's love, and the Saviour's redemption, agreeably to their vast importance; the principal aim with him in every discourse hath been, to keep in view, the necessity of the Spirit's work in the heart, as the sole efficient cause, to render the whole effectual.

He is free to confess his fears, that even among *faithful* Preachers of the word who delight to hold forth the love of God the Father in the gift of redemption, and the glories of the Lord Jesus Christ in his mediatorial character; there is not at the same time so much attention shewn, as the infinite importance of the thing itself demands, in inculcating the expediency of the operations of the Holy Ghost. And yet surely a moment's consideration is enough to convince any man, who is himself a living evidence of his power, that too much can never be said concerning his Person and Offices, under whose Almighty Ministry

istry, the Church is governed and from whose divine Agency alone, all the eventual success of it in every individual instance must result. And he hopes, that the very interesting nature of the subject will plead his apology when he adds, that according to his conception of things the most excellent discourses in setting forth the mercies of redemption are no better than the display of some sweet and inviting fruit growing on a high wall and out of all reach, unless also they direct to God the Holy Ghost as the medium of attaining.

If one humble Soul among the Redeemer's exercised family, should, from the perusal of these Sermons, be led to see in a tried hour, from whose gracious operations alone, relief is to be found; and to seek his aids whose peculiar office it is *to take of the things of Jesus and to shew unto his people*: and more especially if one among the *faithful Dispensers of the word of life*, should be prompted to speak more frequently of the Spirit's work in the heart as the truest evidence of Salvation; the Author's design in the composition of these Sermons will be abundantly answered, and may GOD have all the praise.

Commending both the Writer and his labours to the divine blessing, he hath only to add, that the whole profits of the present impression of 1500 Copies, will be applied by another hand to the Supply of the various wants of *the household of faith*.

PLYMOUTH, .
CHARLES VICARAGE,
June, 1801.

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- Page 54 line 4, for characters he, read character she.
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Sermon 1.

ALL BLESSINGS TRACED TO THEIR SOURCE.

John, 15th Chap. 16th Verse.

Ye have not chosen me but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.

THERE is nothing more gratifying to the mind, than when in the enjoyment of any one given blessing, we are able to trace it to its source, and can discover, both the author of it, and his kind intentions in giving it.

If I am made happy, in the possession, of even one of the most common mercies of life, that mercy, be it what it may, is made doubly sweet, when the hand of God is seen in the appointment. It is a mercy then, twice blessed.

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First,

First, in respect to its own nature, and secondly, as coming to me, with a peculiar, and personal direction, from God. The Traveller, who, on some sultry mountain, discovers unexpectedly a cooling stream, to assuage his thirst, will drink of it, with a tenfold pleasure, if in the moment of enjoyment, he considers it as flowing for his refreshment, from the immediate gift of heaven. Nay, will it not be allowed, that, in the pleasing intercourse of social life, our felicities are all heightened, from the consciousness of the good will with which the kindnesses of our friends are accompanied. If then in *natural* things, our enjoyments receive an increase from such causes, what an accession of happiness must it be in *spirituals*, when we are enabled to trace them up to him, and to his special appointment, who is the predisposing cause of all?

If I enjoy the gracious operations of the Holy Ghost in my soul; if the person, and gifts, and righteousness, of the Redeemer be dear to my heart; if I know what it is, *to have fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ*; will not these distinguishing mercies be yet abundantly increased, both in sweetness, and in value, when they are discovered to be the result of that *everlasting love*, wherewith God hath loved his people, *before the foundation of the world*? Such views, serve to confirm, and no less at the same time to explain, the meaning of that saying of the Apostle's, when speaking of a divine appointment in all our mercies, he re-
fers

fers the whole into God's sovereign will; *who hath saved us and called us with an holy calling not according to our works but according to his own purpose and grace which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.**

And moreover, beside the enjoyment of the blessing itself, in those distinguishing properties of it, there are several other very interesting qualities, folded within its bosom. What method can be as effectual under God, to induce all the practical fruits of the gospel, as when, from pointing to the source, from whence all grace issues, is necessarily implied, from whence, all must be looked for? And is it not, of all possible arguments, the strongest, and the best, both to saint, and sinner, to manifest that He, who is the Author, and Finisher, of salvation, is the only Being, from whom *every good and every perfect gift must come?*

Tell me, you, who from a clear conviction of your own unworthiness, are ever ready, to ascribe your recovery, from sin, to salvation, *to the praise of the glory of his grace wherein he hath made you accepted in the beloved*, tell me, what motive do you find equally powerful in prompting you *to shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light*, as the consciousness, that *God hath chosen you in Christ before the foundation of the world*, that you

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should

* 2 Tim. 1. 9.

should be holy and without blame before him in love?† Doth not this conviction, operate beyond any other, to induce you to adorn the doctrine of God your Saviour in all things? And if by divine grace you find yourself preserved in the path of duty, is it not truly refreshing to the soul to discover the cause, that you are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them? §

And no less let the Sinner say, if it be God's choice, and not man's desert; if all the difference between one man, and another, originates in Him, *who giveth to every one severally as he will*, why should you question more than others, but that you may be the happy partaker of the same grace also? Surely, there would be abundantly more reason to doubt receiving the divine favor, if that favor, was depending upon your desert of it, than if it be the sole result of unmerited bounty and goodness!

I have been led into this train of observation, from the perusal of the precious words, of the Lord Jesus in the text. *Ye have not chosen me but I have chosen you and ordained you that ye should go and bring forth fruit and that your fruit should remain that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name he may give it you.* Abstracted from any personal relation, which those

† Ephes. 1. 4.

§ Ephes. 2. 10.

those words may be supposed to have, as more particularly addressed to the disciples of Christ, at that period, and age, of the Church, in which they were first spoken; they contain this plain, and important truth, which is not confined to any period, but in all ages must have the same obvious, and determined meaning: that the personal salvation, of every true believer in Jesus, is founded, not in human merit, but in divine favor, not in our choice of Christ, but in his choice of us: for, that *it is not of him that willeth nor of him that runneth but of God that sheweth mercy*: or to sum it up, in the full comprehensive words of the Apostle, *for of him and through him and to him are all things, to whom be glory for ever and ever.* *

If you will analyze the several parts of the text, you will find, that they all bear a corresponding testimony, to this one, and the same leading truth. *Ye have not chosen me but I have chosen you.* No one I venture to think, after this declaration of Christ, can be such an Advocate for the free will, and merit of man, as to invert the order of these words, and fancy the reverse, of what the Lord Jesus hath said to be true. Depend upon it what *John* the Apostle observes, is a positive fact, and of universal extent; if *we love him*, it is *because he first loved us.* †

And

* Rom. 11. 36.

† 1 John 4. 19.

And the *ordination*, which follows in the text, this choice of the Redeemer, as plainly manifests, that the grace which hath appointed to the *end*, hath also appointed suitable and sufficient *means* for its accomplishment. *I have ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit.* It is *all* in the divine appointment. *Thou O Lord* (saith the Church) *hast wrought all our works in us* : † or as the Lord expresses it himself, in another scripture : *from me is thy fruit found.* ||

Neither is this all. It would not indeed answer the purposes of salvation, if like abortions in the natural world, the setting fruit of the fairest blossoms, was liable to fall off : Jesus therefore adds one circumstance more, and that a very material one ; I have not only ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, but *that your fruit shall remain.* It is an object of the highest moment, to the peace and comfort of the believer, to be well assured, that the grace which begins the work, will carry it on and complete it. And therefore, nothing can be more satisfactory, than to know, that being *chosen*, and *ordained*, by a will that is not his own, he shall be preserved by a grace, that is more than mortal ; and *kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.*

And lastly, as a comprehensive expression, which conveys to the believer, the assurance of every

† Isaiah 26. 12.

|| Hosea 14. 8.

every blessing he may stand in need of, in passing on, through a life of grace, to glory; Jesus hedges in the whole, of the many precious things in this text, with that delightful promise in the close of it, and founded in the security, of his own all prevailing intercession, *whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name he may give it you.*

I question, whether in the whole compass of scripture, a verse can be found, more copious in its contents, respecting those momentous doctrines of our most holy faith, than what is here contained. What I propose from it, as God the Spirit shall be pleased to enable me, is simply this; to shew you, that *the whole sum and substance of our redemption from beginning to end is included in this free, sovereign, and unmerited choice of God, in Christ Jesus.* This is the leading doctrine insisted upon in the text, and all the other parts naturally arise out of it. To this therefore alone, I shall limit your present attention.

In the accomplishment of this purpose, the arrangement of my discourse, will be; in the *first* place, to establish the certainty of the doctrine. And then *secondly*, to point to the practical effects which arise out of it. And, if God the Holy Ghost, shall be graciously pleased (which I most humbly implore,) to be our Teacher, in confirming the truth of the doctrine, by a personal application of it to our hearts,
we

we shall be enabled to assume the language of the Apostle, which he used to the Church of the *Thessalonians*, upon the same occasion, and say as he did, *we are bound to give thanks always to God for you brethren beloved of the Lord because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.* §

In pursuit of the *first* object I proposed, which is to prove the truth of our blessed Lord's declaration in the text, *ye have not chosen me but I have chosen you*, the best method I humbly conceive, will be, by tracing *effects*, to their *causes*; which will fully demonstrate, that the first advance in the way of grace, evidently begins in God and not in man. For if, it can be shewn, that such things as accompany salvation, are altogether disproportioned, to the powers of man to produce, the inference will undeniably follow, that the appointment must be, in an higher ordination, and that ordination is God. And I venture to believe, that in no one circumstance of life, can this be more fully shewn, or perhaps equally so, than in the subject now under consideration.

The Scripture, in a tone of decision, which admits of no appeal, awfully declares, that we are by nature, not only in a fallen, sinful state, but so totally ruined in all our faculties, that
even

even the knowledge of divine things, much less a predilection for them, nature, untaught, and unenlightened, by an higher power, never could attain. And the Apostle *Paul*, under the teachings of God the Holy Ghost, considers this point as a matter so certain, and incontrovertible, that he sets it down, as a fixed thing: *the natural man (says he) receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God for they are foolishness unto him neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned.** And elsewhere he assigns the reason; *Having the understanding darkened being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them because of the blindness of their heart, §* To suppose therefore, that characters of this description, should make the *first* advances in the renewed life towards God, would be as absurd, as to imagine a dead body, to arise by its own powers, to all the exercises of animal functions.

Equally inconsistent is it with the divine glory, and altogether destructive, of all the just conceptions, we can form, of the freedom, and sovereignty of God's grace, to suppose, that though it be admitted, God's choice is the *first* cause, yet, that choice, originated in the foreknowledge of God, that such as become the objects of his favor, would by their subsequent conduct, be found more deserving than others, and therefore, God foreseeing this, was directed in this predilection. This idea, is perfectly

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suited

* 1 Cor. 2. 14.

§ Epes. 4. 18.

suites, to gratify man's pride, but becomes highly injurious to God's glory. And by the way, my Brother, let me beg of you, to mark this down, in the memorandums of your diary, as a never-failing maxim; that *whatever tends to inflate the mind with the least exalted notions of any thing good in itself by so much robs God of his honor, and man of his happiness.* Very sweet indeed I confess, is the reflection to the soul of the truly regenerate, when he can look back, and consider the change wrought upon him, that *he who was once darkness is now light in the Lord.* And still more pleasing will be the view, when he can trace the blessed effects of this change, in his life, in the progressive path of that light, *which shineth more and more unto a perfect day.* But in every review of this kind, there is a voice which accompanies it, and which the truly gracious soul delights to hear, *who maketh thee to differ from another and what hast thou which thou didst not receive?* † That God's choice will be followed with the gift of God's grace in the heart, is unquestionable; for he that saith, *I have chosen you,* saith also, *I have ordained you that ye should go and bring forth fruit.* But to fancy, that this choice, is the result of some supposed latent worthiness in the object, and not of God's free and unmerited love, is to invert the very order of things, and to make the effect precede its cause.

Let us advance one step higher in the argument, in confirmation of this doctrine, and observe,

observe, that the term *grace*, becomes at once the most decided proof of the whole. For in fact, it looses its very name, if there be an atom of supposed merit in the receiver. It ceases then, to be a gratuitous act, but on the contrary, it partakes of the nature of a reward. *If it be of works (saith an Apostle) then is it no more of grace, for otherwise grace is no more grace.** Nay, so far are the highly favoured objects of this bounty, from being considered, as contributing in the smallest degree, to the reception of it, that they are beheld, not barely as undeserving, but ill deserving; not simply as unworthy of mercy, but worthy of punishment. Grace therefore signifies, an act of unmerited clemency, bestowed upon a set of creatures, who in the very moment of receiving it, are justly deserving God's displeasure.

You will immediately perceive from this statement, how impossible it is, consistent with God's glory, for man to assume any merit to himself, respecting his salvation; either in the original appointment, or in the after stages of grace. For if I fancy myself, even in the smallest possible degree, to have merited divine favor, the very character of grace looses its name. But if, (as is really the case) I see myself, in the very moment of becoming, the object of this distinguishing mercy, both in the first manifestations of it, and in all the after periods of life, as singled out from the throng of my
 B 2 fellow

* Rom. 11. 6.

fellow creatures, all alike unworthy, and all equally undeserving; such views of grace, will then afford proper ideas, of what it really is, and compel the heart of every one, who is conscious of being the happy partaker of it, to cry out with the astonished disciple *Lord how is it that thou hast manifested thyself to me and not unto the world?*

But it were to leave the subject unfinished, tho' confirming the doctrine, were we to rest here, without connecting with it, some other delightful properties, which belong to the same. The fact once admitted, that all our mercies originate, in this predilection of grace, it must immediately follow, that as nothing new, or undetermined, could at any period arise in the divine mind, which had not existed there before; every purpose concerning salvation, must have been formed, in the eternal, and unchangeable purposes of God in Christ Jesus, before the world began. Hence therefore, a door of the most important nature, is at once thrown open, by the discovery of this leading truth; and all those sweet, and precious doctrines, of the Father's mercy, the Redeemer's love, and the Spirit's grace, are unfolded to view, and brought forward with a strength of testimony, that may indeed astonish the mind, but which nothing can refute.

Sceptics

Sceptics may question, and impiously arraign, both God's wisdom, and his goodness. But my province is, not to answer the angry accusations of the ungodly, but to satisfy the humble enquiries of the just. The Apostle hath drawn, a beautiful model for imitation in this particular, which may serve as a guide, for every one, who supposes himself called upon to make reply to the presumptuous reasoning of the unhumiliated mind. He borrows a figure from common life, of the *Potter*, exercising power over *the same lump of clay, to make one vessel unto honor and another to dishonor*;^{*} and takes occasion therefrom to shew, that He, who hath made all things, and *for whose pleasure they are, and were created*, hath an unquestionable authority, to do what he will with his own. And to strike dumb in everlasting silence, the profane tongue, which might be prompted to go further, and demand a reason; every thing in reference to his will, who hath appointed all, terminates in this; *shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?*

If I have said enough to answer the *first* object which I proposed from this subject, I come now to the *second*. Having I hope fully ascertained the certainty of the doctrine; to this will very properly succeed, the practical effects arising out of it.

Some

^{*} Rom 9. 21.

Some have thought, that the doctrine is in itself so ill-calculated, to induce any effects of godliness, that it throws to the ground, the whole system of religion, and morality. And *others* have gone so far, as to insist upon it, that an attention to the means of grace, is superseded thereby, and become unnecessary. You will hear men of this complexion, not unfrequently demanding, to what use, can be the practice of any religious, or moral obligation? For if a man be chosen in Christ, he is eternally safe, let him do what he may: If he be not, he is sure to be lost, let him do what he can. But these are rather the sayings, of light and inconsiderate persons, than the sober and pious reflections, of the wise and serious. I venture to believe, that of all subjects tending under God's grace, to induce the greatest attainments in piety and virtue; the doctrine of being chosen in Christ to salvation and happiness, is the highest and the best. And I venture moreover to hope, that before I have finished the subject, I shall prove to the clearest demonstration, that no possible argument, is of equal persuasion, like this, to form the mind to the exercise of all those christian graces, which unquestionably are among the truest evidences of the renewed life.

A few observations, on this branch of our subject, will set the matter in a clear point of view.

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The Apostle *Paul*, after directing an animated discourse to the church at *Philippi*, in which he had been insisting, with great earnestness, on some of the leading doctrines of the gospel, makes this as the immediate and unavoidable inference of the whole. *Finally brethren whatsoever things are true whatsoever things are honest whatsoever things are just whatsoever things are pure whatsoever things are lovely whatsoever things are of good report if there be any virtue and if there be any praise think on these things** From hence nothing can be more evident than that, the apostle considered, a clear apprehension of the great blessings of redemption, and a conscious sense of being personally interested in them, became the most powerful of all arguments, to an holy life and conversation. And indeed, if it can be supposed, that such motives should fail, every lesser consideration must prove ineffectual.

Let us examine this claim, under each of the great branches of duty, which constitute the devout, and social obligations: either as it concerns our deportment towards God, our Neighbour, or ourselves.

As it concerns *our duty towards God*. No appeal to the heart surely can be equal to this. For if a conscious sense, of having become the

* Philip. 4: 8.

the distinguished object of divine favor, when every thing on our part, justly made us the object of divine vengeance: if amidst the shipwreck of human nature, *you* my Brother, behold yourself as one, brought to shore, by an Omnipotent arm, while the carcasses of thousands, are floating before you: if, in direct opposition, to all your rebellion, ingratitude, and disobedience, God hath saved *you*, and called you with an holy calling:—*what* shall I say? if, while God says, *I knew that thou wouldest deal very treacherously and wast called a transgressor from the womb* † and yet notwithstanding all this, for *his great love wherewith he hath loved you even when you were dead in sin hath quickened you together with Christ* ‡ can the imagination form to itself, any one argument like this, to stimulate to godliness and virtue? And will any one venture to suppose, that the mind, which is dead and insensible to such a claim as this, would be alive to any other?

Consider the subject also in another relation, as it concerns *the duty we owe our neighbour*. That the Apostle *Paul* thought the distinguishing mercy of God, to be the strongest persuasive in the mind, to lead to the practice of all the obligations, between man and man, is evident; for upon a remarkable occasion, while

† Isaiah 48. 8

‡ Ephes. 2. 5.

while exhorting the *Colossians*, to such duties, he enforces their observance from this very cause. *Put on* (says he) *as the elect of God bowels of mercies kindness humbleness of mind meekness longsuffering.* As if the consciousness of being so chosen, and so distinguished, by divine mercy, impelled the heart, to the observance of all tenderness and compassion. And the Apostle urges yet further, that in the unavoidable offences of life, which from the frailty of our poor fallen nature, after all endeavours to the contrary, will come; believers of all men are called upon, *to forbear one another and to forgive one another even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven them.** And who is there, that can arise from before the mercy seat, under a deep sense of being remitted ten thousand talents, and can go forth and take a fellow sinner by the throat, for the payment of an hundred pence? Surely, the unanswerable appeal of the Apostle, can never cease to vibrate in the ear of every one, who hath heard, and *knows the joyful sound; beloved if God so loved us how ought we also to love one another! †*

And in respect to the blessed effects, which a just sense of being chosen in Christ is calculated to produce in the heart in *the duty we owe ourselves*, it is a well known character, and in fact the truest evidence that the work of grace is begun in the soul, that *they that*

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are

* Coloss. 3. 12. 13.

† 1. John. 4. 11.

are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts. For if any man be in Christ he is a new creature.

I challenge the whole world therefore, to bring forward such motives as these, and which naturally (or rather I should have said graciously) spring out of this doctrine, for reforming the heart, and regulating the morals of mankind.

But though I contend, that these considerations, are superior to every other, to induce such a train of conduct in the heart of man, yet I am free to confess that neither these considerations, or any other, are in themselves, of sufficient influence, to give a new tide, and current to the affections. It must be *God who worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure. All our sufficiency is from Him.* But herein lieth the excellency of our present doctrine. For it is a circumstance intimately connected with our subject, and which I particularly beg none will overlook, that the exercise of those christian graces, do not depend upon the fickle purposes in man, but in the unchangeable love of God. Remember the text. He that *chooseth* his people, *ordaineth* them also, to bring forth fruit. And the same grace which appoints, affords power to perform. The charter of grace runs in these words.

words. *I will give them one heart and one way that they may fear me for ever. I will make an everlasting covenant with them that I will not turn away from them to do them good but I will put my fear in their heart that they shall not depart from me.*† Here then lies the security; and which no other source beside can give, neither any motives of moral persuasions enforce. God undertakes for the accomplishment of the whole, in answering both for himself, and for his people. *I will not, (saith God) and they shall not.*

And what is the real matter of fact, as it is found in the experience of mankind. Look I beg of you abroad into the world, and see, whether among those who profess their conviction in this doctrine they are at the same time, less devout towards God, less just, or friendly to their neighbours; or whether, they are immoral in themselves. You know the reverse to be the case. For if they are true to their principles, they are on the contrary, *examples to believers in word in conversation in charity in spirit in faith in purity.* They know, and their lives bare testimony to that knowledge, that *the grace of God which bringeth salvation hath appeared unto all men teaching them that denying ungodliness and worldly lust they should live soberly righteously and godly in this present world looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our*

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Saviour

† Jeremiah 32. 39. 40.

Saviour Jesus Christ. And this is, and must be, the one uniform desire, of their hearts, that *he who gave himself for them that he might redeem them from all iniquity might purify them unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works.* §

I have only in conclusion to beg of God the Spirit, to make our subject profitable, both to *Saint* and *Sinner*, under his blessed influence.

To the *former*, I would say, do not forget my Brother, to seek grace from God upon every occasion in life to accustom yourself to trace all your mercies up to this fountain head. Depend upon it, that you will find a double sweetness therefrom, in every one of them. Even the most common providence, will then appear to you, not without some special commission from Him, whose wisdom is everlastingly employed for you, and whose faithfulness assures you, that *all things* how trifling soever they may seem, or how unpromising soever they may appear, *work together for good to them that love God and who are the called according to his purpose.* And tell me if you can, what life can be so pleasant, as that life of faith, which is for ever living on the unchangeable purposes of God in Christ, issuing as they are, from an everlasting love, and manifesting themselves in all the multiform methods of his grace.

And

And to the *latter*, I would very affectionately observe, that however unconcerned you may at present fancy yourself to be, in all the grand interests of this doctrine, do not depart my Brother without taking with you a short observation to correct those ideas.

As it is the divine favour, and not our merit, which directs God in the choice of his people, so is it from the same free, and sovereign cause, all mercies flow. It is his grace, and not your worth, which hath fixed the bounds of your habitation. It is from the same grace, that your lot is cast in this blessed land, where God is truly known. It is equally from the same predisposing grace, that you are this day brought under a preached gospel. Is it not then reasonable to infer, that if so much grace hath been displayed, in providing the *means*, may not the whole be displayed, on purpose to the accomplishment of the end? Ask your own heart a few questions, Do you bless God, that you were born in those highly favored climes, where the pure gospel is preached? Is it a matter of thankfulness with you that you are brought under the sound of it this day? And would it be the joy of your heart, *to know the truth that the truth may make you free?* If your heart can truly say yes, to these enquires; depend upon it, though you know it not, you are not far, from the kingdom of God. You see this day around you many, that were
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once, as you are: and who are now, the happy partakers of God's unspeakable gift. You may behold them in the enjoyment of this rich mercy, reading their pardons on their knees, in transports of rejoicing. Beg of God, then to be made receivers of the same grace. Say to the Father of mercies in that sweet scripture *the companions hearken to thy voice cause me to hear it.** In a word, let a man of this description, make the same experiment in spiritual things, which is done in natural concerns. Suppose a company of beggars, at the gate of a Prince, waiting for a supply, without which, they must perish for ever: and suppose, that he hath not only bestowed the mercy to thousands, and tens of thousands, yet his bounty is not at all diminished, but remains the same, in an endless profusion: and suppose moreover, that he hath caused it to be proclaimed, that *all that come he will in no wise cast out!* Would any poor perishing creature depart, while such a proclamation of mercy is sounding? Would he despair, under such encouraging circumstances?

I add no more, but an earnest prayer, that God the Holy Ghost, may awaken many a heart and send home many a humble mind, under the pleasing assurance, of being personally interested, in the words of the Apostle: *Ye are a chosen generation a royal priesthood an holy nation a peculiar people that ye should shew*

* Cant. 8. 13.

shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light which in time past were not a people but are now the people of God which had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy. †

even found the praises of him who hath called
you out of darkness into his marvelous light
which in time past were not a people but are
now the people of God which had not obtained
mercy but have obtained mercy.

SECTION 2

THE FIRST PART OF THE EPISTLE

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Sermon 2.



JESUS IN HIS PRIESTLY OFFICE.

Preached before the administration of the ordinance of the Supper.

Judges, 13th Chap. 19th 20th Verses.

And the Angel did wonderfully and Manoah and his wife looked on. For it came to pass when the flame went up toward heaven from off the Altar that the Angel of the Lord ascended in the flame of the Altar.

EVERY circumstance which hath the smallest reference, either to the Person, or offices, of the Lord Jesus, becomes very precious in the contemplation to his people. There is not a single event, connected with a matter so infinitely interesting, which can be considered as trifling, or unimportant, to a truly awakened soul. And when we see, with what a world of concern, the Holy Ghost, in his scriptures of the Old Testament, hath ushered in the
D wonderful

wonderful subject, in the long train of types, and figures, and ceremonies, under the law, all shadowing the Person, and offices, of the Lord Jesus, it should seem, that nothing can more correspond, to the mind of God, than in following up, those gracious intentions which he hath manifested, in causing them to be thus recorded, for the information, and improvement, of his Church in all ages, by having frequent recourse to the sacred volume of the *old* Testament, as one among the many methods of his grace, to confirm our faith in the *new*.

The text (if I mistake not) belongs to a very interesting record of this kind, in the manifestation of the Lord Jesus, to a family of the house of Israel, a long series of years, before his incarnation. It is said, by one of the Prophets, that *his goings forth have been from of old from everlasting*. And elsewhere, in the same volume, when represented under the character of wisdom, the Son of God is introduced, as referring to the coming redemption, and saying of himself, *the Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way before his works of old I was set up from everlasting from the beginning or ever the earth was rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth and my delights were with the sons of men*. Hence therefore, it is evident, that the Redeemer, hath been set up, as the Covenant God-man, from everlasting. And it is also as evident, that his goings forth have been corresponding thereunto. And indeed, what

what are all the manifestations which are met with in the old Testament, of the appearance of God to his people, sometimes in an human form and at others, under the character of an Angel; but evidences of those precious truths? I stay not to particularize the instances, they are too numerous to be brought, within the limits of a sermon. But they all serve, to throw a light on those scriptures, which relate such appearances. And they do somewhat more than this, for they not only simply confirm the fact, but they prove to us also, this sweet testimony; that He, whose delights were with the sons of men, before they were called into existence, thereby anticipated the period of his manifestation in the flesh, when creation work was completed; and therefore he graciously adopted such methods as those, to intimate how much he longed for that fulness of time, when by his righteousness, and death, he should expiate the sins of his people, and *gather together in one the children of God which were scattered abroad.**

In the particular proof of it to which our text refers, the history, as far as is connected with my present design, is to the following purpose. *Manoah*, and his wife, had received a visit from *One*, who appeared to them in the form of a man. It is evident from the relation, that neither the man, or the woman, at the time of his appearance, had any idea who

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this

* John 11. 52.

this Visitor was, for they asked his name, and were told that it was *secret*. But, when in the moment of offering sacrifice, (which at their earnest request they were permitted to do) he ascended in the flame, from off the Altar, they then knew who it was, that it was He whom all sacrifices were designed to represent, and by faith in whose name all were offered up; and in confirmation of it, they both fell on their faces to the ground: and the man cried out, under the impression of fear, from having seen the manifestation of the *Shechinah*, *we shall surely die because we have seen God*. Nothing can be more decisive in proof, that *Manoah* considered the Angel in this point of view, from the expression he used. For the sight of any *created* excellence, he will know, was attended with no such danger. None of the children of Israel could be ignorant, that it is God alone, of whom their scriptures declared, *thou canst not see my face and live*. †

I prosecute not the sequel of the history. It is this single trait of character, concerning the Person, and offices, of the Lord Jesus, here presented, to which I wish to limit your present attention. According to my conception of things, it affords a very sweet, and encouraging view, of our Adorable Redeemer, in his *Priestly* character: perhaps equal to any that can be found, in the old testament scripture.

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† Exod. 33. 20.

The leading features of the Representation seem to be those. In the first view of it, it sets forth, that Christ alone, is the true sacrifice, and the only unmixed offering for sin. For the text saith, that while *the Angel did wonderfully*, (according to his name which is *wonderful*. †) *the man and his wife looked on*. Thus Believers, behold Jesus, with an eye of faith, in the accomplishment of his finished salvation. They look on, and adore, but they can do no more. Nothing indeed, can be mingled, with the blood and righteousness, of the Lord Jesus Christ, to procure acceptance with God. The fire consumes all that is our's. For it is not said without an express allusion to this solemn transaction, that *when he made his soul an offering for sin; he trod the wine press alone, and of the People there was none with him*. His own Arm brought salvation. §

In the next view of this representation, the subject spiritually considered, affords this delightful prospect also; that as the Lord Jesus is the alone sacrifice for sin, so is he the only Intercessor for sinners: for by *ascending in the flame from off the Altar*, he as plainly manifested, that he it is alone which carries up his own sacrifice as the oblation, and there ever lives to plead the efficacy of it for his people: agreeably to the language of the *Apostle*, when speaking of the Redeemer under both parts of his Priestly office; *when he had (said he) by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high*. * Such

† Isaiah 9. 6.

§ Isaiah 63. 3. 5.

* Heb. 1. 3.

Such is the interesting doctrine, which this scripture opens to our view, by way of calling up our serious meditation. It forms a subject therefore at all times highly interesting, but more peculiarly appropriate, to the Altar service. You are about to approach the ordinance of commemoration, of the sacrifice, and death, of the Lord Jesus. What subject can I bring before you, equally suited to awaken under God the Spirit's influence, all the devout exercises of the heart?

Perhaps I may be speaking before *some*, who in the very moment of approaching the Altar, are labouring under a cold, and languid state of soul, and complaining of heart straitenings in prayer. And it is possible, there may be *others* like *Mary* of old at the Sepulchre, who though seeking Jesus, are yet seeking a risen and ascended Saviour, among dead ordinances. No doubt there are *many* present also, under various complaints, by reason of sin, and corruption; the buffetings of the enemy; and the darkness of their own hearts. Now to those, and every other state of spiritual distress, one view of the Lord Jesus in this his glorious Mediatorial office, if presented to the soul by the Holy Ghost, will go further to quicken the heart, and excite the animated affections, than by any other persuasives whatever. And if but one, poor, timid disciple, shall be this day refreshed, so as to look through the ordinance itself, to behold and enjoy, the God of ordinances, neither your attention, or my labour, will be in vain in the Lord.

What

What I propose from the subject, as God the Holy Ghost shall be pleased to enable me, is, in the *first* place, to consider some, of the more prominent features, in this perfect sacrifice of the Lord Jesus, which are represented in the text, by the *Angel's doing wonderfully*; the man, and his wife, bearing no part in it, *but only looking on*. And *secondly*, to consider some of the outlines of the Redeemer's office, in that of his Intercession also, shadowed in the latter part of the text, under these expressions, that *when the flame went up toward heaven from off the Altar he ascended in the flame*. And may that God, whose office it is, *to take off the things of Jesus and to shew to his people*; so graciously be with us in this undertaking, that *seeing* (as the Apostle speaks) *we have such an High Priest who is passed into the heavens Jesus the Son of God*, we may hold fast our profession; *For we have not an high priest, which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points, tempted like as we are, yet without sin*. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

I am in the first place, according to my proposals, to consider, some, of the more prominent features, in the perfect sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In the accomplishment of this, I stay not to go over the ground of argument, in quest of
proofs,

proofs, for the expediency of such a measure. I shall for once, assume this for granted. Indeed, the offering of the body of the Lord Jesus upon the cross, carries with it, the fullest, and most satisfying testimony, both of its expediency, and of its infinite importance. The death of Christ, decidedly determines the utterly lost and ruined state of nature void of such a sacrifice: For as an Apostle saith on the subject, and which is as much the decision of reason, as of revelation, *if one died for all then were all dead.** The death of Christ, as fully declares that an adequate atonement for sin was required, both to wash away its guilt, and to stop its penal effects. Every Victim, slain upon every Altar, from the fall of Adam, to the death of Christ, loudly proclaimed, that *without shedding of blood there was no remission.*† And common sense, became the echo to the voice of the gospel, under this particular, when it said, that *it is not possible for the blood of bulls and of goats to take away sin.*§ And the death of Christ, which both proclaimed, the ruined state of man, and the necessity of an atonement for his recovery, as plainly taught, that that nature, could not be repaired, nor that atonement made, by the sinner himself, either in a way of doing, or of suffering. For a nature so maimed, and corrupt, could never be competent, to the obedience of an holy law for the future; neither to the purposes of an holy sacrifice, for the breaches of the past; and therefore, it must follow, that without this substitute, in the Person of the Lord Jesus, our fallen nature, must have remained, exposed to the just judgment of God, to all eternity. Upon

* 2 Cor. 5. 14.

† Heb. 9. 22.

§ Heb. 10. 4.

Upon this foundation, rests that infinitely precious doctrine, which arises out of the Priestly Office, of the Lord Jesus; and which God the Eternal Spirit, considered so truly momentous, as to cause it to be preached to the Church, in types, and shadows, similar to the instance in the text, in all the antecedent ages of it, until the period of its being accomplished in reality, in the Person of Christ. And perhaps, among the interesting subjects connected with redemption, nothing can be more satisfying to the soul of every true believer in Jesus, than to observe, how exactly corresponding, to all our wants in every particular, the great author of salvation appeared, for the accomplishment of this wonderful undertaking. It forms indeed, one of the most pleasing studies, to trace the footsteps of Jesus, in his goings forth to the service.

To answer the full purposes of redemption, it became necessary, that, the righteous law of God, which man had broken, should be repaired; and the penalty, due to the breach of it, should be paid. He therefore, and he alone, whose spotless purity, might fulfil the one, and satisfy the other, could be competent to this office. *Such an high Priest* (saith an Apostle) *became us who is holy harmless undefiled separate from sinners and made higher than the heavens.* * And such, was the Lord Jesus Christ. For in the union of the divine nature,

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* Heb. 7. 26

with the human; we discover an adequate character for this end. As *man*, he had a body properly prepared, and fitted, to all the purposes, of *doing*, and *suffering*. For assuming our nature, by the miraculous impregnation, of the Holy Ghost on the body of the Virgin Mary, without the intervention of an human father; tho' he took upon him the form of man, he took none of the infirmities of man; though *in all points like as we are*, yet it was without sin.† And as *God*, the Deity of his person, gave a divine efficacy to all that he wrought, in the great work of redemption. And by the junction of *both*, that most essential, and distinguishing part, of his Priestly character, as a *Days-man*, or *Mediator*, between God, and man, to accommodate the breach which sin had made, was provided for. None but he, who as one with God, knew the mind of God, could say, what was suitable, or what was becoming, the dignity of God to accept, by way of reconciliation. And none but he, who as man, participated in all the feelings of man, could know, what a being, of such weakness and inability as man, had to offer. Hence therefore, in the mysterious union of Person, in which the Lord Jesus came, and tabernacled among us, (little as our greatest researches can go in the discovery of this wonderful subject) we see enough to form a proper conception that He, of whom such things are said, could alone be truly competent, to the great work of our redemption.

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† Heb. 4. 15.

It was in this glorious character, that the Lord Jesus came, For the purpose of our redemption, he appeared as our representative, and became the Surety, and Sponsor, for his people. He pledged himself in our stead, to fulfil the whole law of God; and when he had accomplished this purpose, he offered himself a spotless sacrifice on the cross, to expiate the penalty due to the breaches of it. And by both, *having* (as an Apostle speaks) *obtained eternal redemption for us he hath for ever perfected them that are sanctified.* †

I should think it a reproach to your understanding, to suppose it necessary, to insist on that very obvious doctrine, which the text hints at; I mean, that in all this, in which the Angel of the Covenant hath done so *wonderously*, there is nothing of our's, joined with it. We look on, as *Manoah*, and his wife did. We admire, and adore, the riches of divine grace. And we do right, to fall in humble silence, adoration, and praise, on our faces to the earth before him. But never forget, that it was *his own Arm that brought salvation. For of the People there was none with him.* § The flame on every Altar, burnt up every sacrifice; and must have burnt for ever, as an indication of God's fiery indignation against sin, had not Jesus's blood been sprinkled on the Altar, to appease it. And remember also that Jesus in his Ascension, took nothing with him of

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† Heb. 10. 14.

§ Isaiah 63. 3. 5.

our's for acceptance before God. Your best prayers, your best services, your richest offerings, ascend but like the smoke of the Altar, and like smoke without flame, are sullied with a thousand impurities. Happy is it for us, that Jesus perfumes them, with the incense of his merits, and that both our persons, and our prayers, are all *accepted in the beloved*.

But what gives the finishing view to the whole, and stamps validity upon all that Jesus did, and suffered for his people; is the precious consideration, that redemption-work, is the result of all the Persons of the Godhead, and is as much the act of grace in the Father, and the anointing of the Holy Spirit, as it is the voluntary undertaking of the Lord Jesus, for the purposes of salvation.

I know not my Brother, what your feelings may be, in this view of our subject. But to me I confess, such a conviction, carries with it a testimony, so very precious and interesting, as I would not be without, for a thousand worlds. For when the corruptions of my heart, aided by the temptations of Satan, would prompt me to fear, that however complete, and satisfactory, to all the demands of God's righteous law, the merits, and sufferings, of the Lord Jesus may be in themselves; yet, when unbelief cries out; how do I know that they
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are accepted before God? How delightful is it then to be assured, that in all the Lord Jesus did, and suffered, he was appointed thereunto, in a Covenant-way, by the Father. It is God the Father which saith; *Behold my servant whom I uphold; mine elect in whom my soul delighteth, I have put my spirit upon him he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. I the Lord have called thee in righteousness and will hold thine hand and will keep thee and give thee for a covenant of the people for a light of the Gentiles. To open the blind eyes to bring out the prisoners from the prison and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house.* I have laid help upon one that is mighty I have exalted one chosen out of the People I have found David my servant with my holy Oil have I anointed him. § Hence therefore, in all the gracious undertaking of our Adored Redeemer, for the accomplishment of our salvation he was solemnly set apart by the Father, and inaugurated to the office, by the holy anointing of the blessed Spirit; and all, confirmed by the solemnity, of an oath. *The Lord swears and will not repent thou art a Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedeck. †* And that the Apostle Paul, considered this as a matter of the highest moment, to the peace and security of the Believer, is evident from his observations upon it, in his Epistle to the *Hebrews*. *No man (says the Apostle) taketh this honor unto himself, but he that is called of God as was Aaron. So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an High Priest but he that said unto him; Thou art my Son this day have I begotten thee. ‡**

And

* Isaiah 42. 1. 6. 7. § Psalm 89. † Psalm 110. 4. ‡ Heb. 5. 4. 5.

And when the Lord Jesus is introduced by the Spirit of Prophecy, in the Church of old, as coming in this character, he is represented as entering upon the work of redemption, by the express appointment of the Father. *Wherefore (saith the sacred Writer) when he cometh into the world he saith; Sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not but a body hast thou prepared me: In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure: Then said I Lo I come in the volume of the book it is written of me to do thy will O God.** Hence we have full authority to draw this conclusion; that it is as much the Father's will, as it is the Son's pleasure, the great work of salvation. And that the Believer at the same time, may not overlook the gracious part, which God the Holy Ghost took, in the concurring operation; the Apostle is careful to tell the Church, that when the Lord Jesus offered himself an offering for sin to the Father, to purge our Consciences from dead works to serve the living God, he *did it through the Eternal Spirit.†*

Never lose sight then I beseech you, of the Father's appointment, and the Holy Ghost's anointing, when you behold the Lord Jesus in the Character of our Redeemer. But as often as you look up to him, in this precious point of view, call to mind, that unanswerable plea for acceptance before God, when drawing nigh the mercy seat, that while you seek his favor, it is in the very way God himself hath appointed. And when at any time you hear with the ear of faith,

* Psalm 40. 6. 7. & Heb. 10. 5. † Heb. 9. 14.

faith, that voice, which while pointing to the Lamb of God saith; *this is my beloved Son hear ye him:*† do you echo to the divine teaching, that prayer which God the Holy Ghost hath left upon record, for the use of the Church in all ages, and say, as you are there taught; *behold O God our shield and look upon the face of thine anointed.*†

But the subject suggested to us in the text doth not end with prefiguring the Redeemer in his complete and finished Sacrifice; another delightful view of his Priestly Office opens beyond it, when ascending in the flame from off the Altar, and affords this doctrine also, that it is one and the same Person who completes redemption-work upon earth, and carries up with him into heaven, his own blood and righteousness, as our All-prevailing Intercessor, to plead the merits of it, for the acceptance of his people before God. This was the *second* Branch of discourse, which I proposed from this subject, and to this let us now direct our attention.

So infinitely interesting is this part of the Priestly Office, in the Redeemer's Character, that God the Holy Ghost, was pleased by the ministry of his servants, in the early Church, to cause to be prefigured, in various shadowy representations, this leading doctrine.

Under

† Matt. 17. 5.

† Psalm 84. 9.

Under the Law, the High Priest, on the great day of Atonement, was enjoined, to enter into the holy of holies, (which was well understood by the People to be a figure of heaven) not without blood, *which he offered for himself and for the errors of the People.* § And that an object of so much importance, might not be left, to the mere conjecture of human interpretation, an Apostle, had it in commission, from the same Almighty Teacher, to tell the Church, that *the Holy Ghost thus signified that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest while the first tabernacle was yet standing, But Christ being come an High Priest of good things to come by a greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands that is to say not of this building neither by the blood of goats and calves but by his own blood entered in once into the holy place having obtained eternal redemption for us.** And as it is expressed in another scripture; *he is entered into heaven itself there to appear in the presence of God for us.* ||

Still carrying on the interesting subject of redemption, by so many separate and distinct views of the Redeemer's character, in his Priestly Office, the Holy Ghost was further pleased, by the ministry of his servants, in the early Church, to cause to be prefigured, by other shadowy representations, the interest which Jesus always takes in the concerns of his people.

§ Heb. 9. 7.

* Heb. 9. 8. 11. 12.

|| Heb. 9. 24.

ple. Hence the High Priest, was enjoined to go in unto the holy place, for a memorial, continually before the Lord, with the names of the Children of Israel, in the breast plate of judgment upon his Heart. And *Aaron* (it is said, *shall bear the names of the children of Israel in the breast plate of judgment upon his heart when he goeth in unto the holy place for a memorial before the Lord continually.**) Hereby manifesting that the Lord Jesus carries in the names of his people continually and sets them, as a seal upon his heart and as a seal upon his arm, when presenting himself before the Father; saying *behold I and the Children which God hath given me.*† And in order to convey the clearest testimony, that both the persons, and the offerings, of the people, depended for acceptance, on the incense of the Redeemer's merits; the High Priest was further enjoined, *to take a Censer full of burning coals of fire from off the Altar before the Lord and his hands full of sweet incense beaten small and bring it within the vail.*‡

We never can sufficiently express, our thankfulness to God the Holy Ghost, in that, he hath graciously condescended, to explain to us himself, by the ministry of his servant *John* the Apostle, the direct reference of these typical representations, to the Person, and of-

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fices,

* Exod. 28. 29.

† Heb. 2. 13.

‡ Levit. 16. 12.

fices, of the Lord Jesus Christ. From him we learn, that all pointed to Jesus, as so many rays of light, converging into one centre. For when the Redeemer appeared to the Apostle, many years after his ascension, he appeared to him, in his *Priestly Garments*: thereby intimating, that he wore the Priesthood still, and in that Character, always appears for his people before God. He saw him also, standing at the Altar, with his golden Censer, and offering much incense, with the prayers of all saints, to testify, that it was He which the High Priest under the law prefigured, and that the acceptance both of the Person, and offerings of his People, all are found in the incense of his merits. And in order that the Church, might never lose sight of the everlasting efficacy of his finished sacrifice, while contemplating the Lord Jesus, in his unchangeable Priesthood; *John* saw him also as a Lamb as it had been slain in the midst of the throne.* thus testifying, that the blood of Jesus, which *Paul* calls a *speaking blood*, § still pleads, and ever will plead, for the salvation of his Church and People.

How very sweet and encouraging are these illustrations of the Redeemer's Priestly Office, in addition, to all the other parts of his character, for the mind to lean upon, in its hopes of acceptance, when approaching God.

Neither

* Rev. 5. 6. § Heb. 12. 24.

Neither must it for a moment be forgotten, that in the whole of those services of the Lord Jesus, both the right by which he pleads, and the covenant engagements, by which the Father is pledged to answer; both the everlasting love of the *one*, in which redemption-work is founded, and the eternal merits of the *other*, by which the redemption itself is purchased; all unite, to give virtue, and efficacy, to what the Lord Jesus hath done, and is doing, for his people.

And let me beg of you, while contemplating this subject, always to connect in one view, the Father's love and the Redeemer's merit, as the united sources of your salvation. Remember what Jesus hath said upon the occasion, *I say not unto you (says Christ) that I will pray the Father for you, for the Father himself loveth you because you have loved me.* || What Jesus demands as a right by redemption, is in one and the same moment the Father's gift from rich mercy. For while we are fully taught, that *we have redemption thro' his blood even the forgiveness of sins*, we are no less taught, that *it is to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.* *

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|| John 16. 26. 27.

* Ephes. 6. 7.

Largely

Largely as I have trespassed, in following up the illustration of this important doctrine, I must not dismiss it, without desiring that you will take with you, some at least of those highly interesting reflections, which arise out of it.

In the infinite merits, of the Sacrifice, and Everlasting Priesthood, of the Lord Jesus, are founded the sole hopes, of the acceptance of every poor Sinner before God. Whether we approach the mercy seat in ordinances in this life; or when we come to stand before the throne of judgment in another; these, become the only possible medium of divine favor, for *there is salvation in no other neither is there any other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.**

Light, and inconsiderate persons, may rush into God's presence, in the engagement of holy ordinances, as the unthinking horse, rusheth into the battle. But this is what *Solomon* calls, the *sacrifice of fools who know not that they do evil.*† It is possible, I may be speaking before one, of this description. If so, shall I beg of you, my unthinking Brother, to pause over the subject, we have been contemplating, if it be but a moment only, and

* Acts 4. 12

† Eccles. 8:1.

and ask your own heart; whether you have ever seriously considered the subject as you ought, and with that reverence it demands. We read in holy scripture, that *God is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity*: that he *requireth truth in the inward parts*: that he *searcheth the heart and trieth the reins*: and that he will be sanctified in all them that draw nigh to him. Are you prepared for this inspection, from any righteousness in yourself? Can you venture to say, *try me O God and seek the ground of my heart for thou shalt find no wickedness in me*? Is it possible, that any man can be so great a stranger to what passes within, as to fancy that he has any thing of his own, to offer before God? If the Sons of Aaron under the levitical Priesthood, were devoured when offering *strange fire before the Lord*;* can you think that under the gospel, the presumption of seeking acceptance, in any way, contrary to the divine appointment will be less dangerous? And is it not seeking it contrary to the divine appointment, when, instead of wholly resting on the merits, and intercession, of the Lord Jesus, we bring somewhat of our own for justification; or what is much the same thing, seek to mingle it for acceptance, with the righteousness of Christ? What is this short of what the Apostle calls, *treading under foot the Son of God counting the blood of the Covenant wherewith we are sanctified an unholy thing and doing despite unto the Spirit of Grace*? †

While

* Levit. 10. 1. 2.

† Heb. 10. 29.

While I very earnestly recommend these solemn considerations, to the congregation at large, and more particularly, to that part of it, who may not have begun as yet, to reflect seriously, upon the subject at all; I beg the favor, to drop a word, of encouragement, and consolation, to those true Believers in Jesus, who are seeking acceptance with God through this only medium, in which it can be found, the finished salvation of the Lord Jesus Christ.

How animating my Brother ought this view of Jesus, in his Priestly Office, to be to your heart? Convinced as you are, that in yourself, you have nothing to bring, and nothing to offer before God, by way of propitiation; is it not sweet, with the eye of faith, to see Jesus, having completed redemption-work upon earth, now going in as the Priest, and Sacrifice, and also your Intercessor, before the Father, in heaven? That the Apostle *Paul*, thought this enough to encourage every heart, is evident from hence; for he makes this, the foundation of all our hopes, and the sure means of all our acceptance. *Seeing (says he) we have such an High Priest that is passed into the heavens Jesus the Son of God let us hold fast our profession.* And, as if aware, in the moment of recommending it, some poor, self condemned sinner, might still be distressed, and kept back, through fear; the Apostle sweetly adds, *for we*

we have not an High Priest that cannot be touched with the feelings of our infirmities but was in all points tempted like as we are yet without sin. § As if he had said forget not, that your Great Intercessor, knows what your feelings are, from his own. He commiserates your state under trial, from having passed through every possible instance of it himself. Let us come boldly therefore to the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Make application, of this precious consideration, of the Apostle's to every case, as it may be necessary among you, and see, how unanswerable it is, in its appeal, to the heart of all the faithful. Are you mourning from a coldness of affection, and indisposition, to divine things? Are you in darkness, and the hidings of God's countenance, and crying out, with One of old, *why standest thou so far off O Lord and hidest thy face in the needful time of trouble?* Is there a trembling Sinner present, groaning under the burthen, of fresh contracted guilt, and saying with David, *my sins have taken such hold upon me that I am not able to look up yea they are more in number than the hairs of my head and my heart hath failed me.* Have any of you lost your evidences of the renewed life, and are tempted by the Enemy, almost to believe, that you have no interest in the Covenant? Do you complain
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my Brother of a dead silence at the mercy seat, and that God refuseth to hear and answer Prayer? What shall give consolation to cases of such peculiar distress as these, and the like, but the view of Jesus, as the High Priest of our holy calling, going in before the throne of God, and presenting himself, and his finished righteousness, for the acceptance of his People! Doth not the Holy Ghost, graciously hold him up, to our view, through all the scriptures, for this express end? Did not the Redeemer himself appear, to the beloved *John*, in his Priestly Vestments, on purpose to teach the Church these precious truths? And was it not in effect saying, to him, and to all believers through him; "See I wear the Priesthood still. I ever live to make intercession for transgressors." Nay, by virtue of this, do I not know, that even in the very moment I am speaking to you of him here, his blood is speaking for every one of his people before the throne in heaven!


What shall I add, unless it be an earnest prayer to God, that while under these impressions of his grace, we may enter into the full meaning of the Apostle's precept, and feel our hearts disposed to the solemn service to which we are now approaching, under the encouraging views, he hath given us. *Having therefore brethren boldness to enter into the holiest*
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*by the blood of Jesus By a new and living way
which he hath consecrated for us through the
veil that is to say his flesh And having an high
priest over the house of God Let us draw near
with a true heart in full assurance of faith. §*

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§ Heb. 10. 19. 20. 21. 22.

Sermon 3.



RELIGION A PERSONAL CONCERN.

John 11 Chap. 28 Verse.

The Master is come, and calleth for thee.

I HAVE been often led to admire, and in that admiration to adore, the divine goodness, when contemplating the wonderful display of grace, which God the Holy Ghost, hath been pleased to adopt, in order to convey, a proper sense, of his distinguishing mercies to the soul. It certainly becomes, no small testimony, of the blessed Spirit's love, and condescension, to his people, his attention to them in this respect. Not satisfied, with making a general proclamation, of the precious things of the gospel, according as their several necessities require; he carries on his divine operations in the heart, in a yet more intimate and endearing manner, and

makes them personal, appropriate and particular. They come by his appointment to the soul, like letters expressly directed, and speak to the person, to whom they are addressed, in a language similar to that of *Paul's* at Antioch; *to you is the word of this salvation sent.** And certainly, there is a sweetness, in the conscious possession of this divine favor, as being special, and distinguishing, which like the *white stone and the new name*, no man knows, *saving he that receives it.†*

Even in the common blessings of God's providence, those which are eminently marked, are as eminently valued. Have you never found occasion in your walk through life, to observe, how God hath distinguished *some*, in this respect beyond *others*. And hath your heart never been warmed, and drawn out, in praises to Him, when from a comparative view of your superior accommodations, you could not but be struck with the difference? If not, how exceedingly are you to be pitied! Not only that you should be so deficient, both in observation, and in thankfulness; but also, in that you must have lost the sweetest part of every special blessing, in not discerning the kind hand that hath given it. I tell you my Brother, and I tell you nothing more than what daily experience proves to be true, that even Carnal men, as much disposed as they are, to call
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* Acts 13. 26.

† Rev. 2. 17.

in question the doctrine of distinguishing *grace*, not only allow a distinguishing *providence*, but even value themselves upon it. The rich man, would never idolize his riches as he doth, if he was not sensible of the difference, between him and his poorer neighbour. Neither would the proud man plume himself upon his title, if the whole world was called by the same name. If then in temporal concerns, men of no religion, know how to appreciate their good things, as they call them, merely because they are not common; shall not the soul, that is conscious of possessing the distinguishing mercies of grace, be led to prize them the more because they are distinguishing?

This doctrine of a personal interest in the great concerns of religion opens a sweet subject for discourse, and (if I mistake not) is strikingly illustrated, in the instance to which the text refers.

The disconsolate Sisters of *Lazarus*, were indulging grief over their Brother's death, when the Lord Jesus drew nigh the village of *Bethany*, where they resided. It appears from the history, that *Mary* (the one of whom the text speaks) at the first information of the Redeemer's arrival, felt no inclination to go to him. Probably, her mind was so absorbed in grief, that

that she paid but little or no attention to the account: or probably, her sorrows had so overwhelmed her, that forgetting, the greatness of Jesus's Character, she concluded that his visit had been postponed too long to afford any relief. *Hope deferred* (the wise man saith) *maketh the heart sick*. * And unbelief, will be for ever suggesting the impossibility in particular cases. *Thy daughter is dead trouble not the Master*. § But as soon as her Sister, who had hastened to Jesus, on the first rumour of his arrival, returned with the account in the text, the Master is come, and calleth *for thee*: this personal enquiry and demand, roused up her attention, and she arose quickly and came to him.

In those features of character, in the instance of this woman, we may I think without violence to the text, discover strong leading particularities to distinguish *special*, from the more *general* calls of the gospel. This is the use which I propose to make, as far as God shall be pleased to enable me, of the words of the text, abstracted from every other part of the history, with which they are connected.

In the prosecution of this subject, I shall in the *first* place, attempt to explain, what is meant

* Prov. 13. 12.

§ Luke 8. 49.

meant by the Master's being come, and in what way he may be said to call. *Secondly*, I shall endeavour to illustrate that doctrine, which is manifested every day in life, that the outward calls of the gospel, unaccompanied with the special, and inward power, always lose their effect: like *Mary* in the text, until the call is personal, and particular, there is an insensibility, and indifference, to all its demands. *Lastly*, I shall go on to shew, that when the gospel is preached *with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven*, and is directed to the heart, with his special application, this gives it an efficacy, similar to the case of *Mary* in the text, and demonstrates, that the Master is not only come, and calleth, but that he calleth personally for *thee*.

Each of those points, will require their separate, and distinct considerations: and it will be a very happy illustration of the subject, if God the Holy Ghost, shall be pleased from a general relation, to make it personal, and particular, in giving some poor unawakened Sinner present, who hath hitherto disregarded all the *outward* calls of God's word, an *inward* conviction of his grace; and that precious scripture be fulfilled to his experience, which saith: *the hour is coming and now is when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God and they that hear shall live.* †

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† John 5. 25.

Our *first* proposal is to explain, what is meant, by the Master's being come, and in what way he may be said to call.

In answer to this enquiry, I consider myself perfectly authorized, from the analogy of scripture, to interpret the phrase, as a comprehensive expression, to denote, the manifestation of *the Son of God in the flesh*. That, the Lord Jesus, is the Glorious Person spoken of, under the appellation of *Master*, is so very obvious, that I conceive, the service would be altogether superfluous in me, to remark. I take for granted no one can require information, that by whatever name the Redeemer is distinguished, in either Testament of Scripture; his Person, and Offices, are too plainly characterized, to occasion any misapprehension in this particular. The phrase itself, of the *Master being come* is only another method of expression, to say; that He who is *the desire of all nations*: the *Shiloh* to whom *the gathering of the People should be*: the *Messenger of the Covenant whom they delight in*: is now come to his Temple. The day hath at length dawned upon the world, which *Abraham saw afar off*: which many *prophets and righteous men* desired to see; and to which, all the faithful among the old Testament saints, had been looking forward, from age, to age, with the most anxious expectation; and for the approach of which,
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every enlightened eye, had so long been directed towards Zion. The *Sun of righteousness* had now arisen with *healing in his wings*.

And hence among those who were waiting for this *consolation of Israel*; what holy joy burst forth from every heart, in the moment of Jesus appearing! Hence good old *Simeon*, to whom it had been revealed by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, until he had seen the Lord's Christ: no sooner was Jesus brought into the temple, than under the same divine teaching, he took him up in his arms, blessed God, and said; *Lord now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace according to thy word for mine eyes have seen thy salvation*. Hence *Philip*, from the same impressions, on the first view of Christ, communicated the transporting intelligence to *Nathaniel*, saying, *we have found him of whom Moses and the Prophets did write Jesus of Nazareth*. And hence the beloved Apostle *John*, under the same conviction, writes to the Church; *we know* (says he) *that the Son of God is come for he hath given us an understanding to know him that is true and we are in him that is true even in his Son Jesus Christ*. And in like manner, in every individual instance, where the Spirit of the Lord Jesus hath pointed to the Person of Christ, and revealed him to the heart, as *the Holy One of Israel the Saviour*: there is, and ever must be, the same blessed assurance. For the Apostle expressly saith, and the heart of every true believer bears a corresponding testimony to the same, that every Spirit

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*that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God.**

And if the Master be come, the purpose of his mission, will be immediately understood, and the manner in which he may be said to call, not very difficult to shew. For in every place, where his Gospel is faithfully preached, as a full, free, and finished salvation; we have as complete and satisfying a testimony, of his being come, as they who saw him in the day of his own personal ministry, and heard the gracious words, which proceeded out of his mouth. Every renewed call of his word; every repeated administration of his ordinances; the many public means of grace, established in his Church, and handed down in perpetual succession; and the numberless private opportunities, of hearing his voice, in the ministry of his holy scriptures: all these are so many plain, and decided testimonies, that the Master is come, and that the *Mighty God even the Lord hath spoken and called the earth from the rising of the sun unto the going down thereof. Out of Zion the perfection of beauty God hath shined.*§ Nay, what are all those precious manifestations, in the sacred ordinances of worship, which true believers in Christ, so highly value, and in which at times, they feel so much real joy, and consolation, but evidences of the same great truth.

Speak,

* 1 John 4. 2.

§ Psalm 50. 1. 2.

Speak ye truly regenerated believers, whether you do not know by heart-felt experience, what it is to have *fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ*? Doth not Jesus, sometimes draw nigh unto you, in the sacred visits of worship, and reveal himself with a loving kindness, and favor, which you esteem *better than life itself*? Have you never found it good, as the disciples did in the *Mount*, when at certain seasons, you have sat under the shadow of his ordinances with great delight, and *his fruit hath been sweet to your taste*? And hath not your heart, very frequently burned within you, like those in their journey to *Emmaus*, when in the hearing, or reading of his word, Jesus himself hath drawn nigh, in the sweet teachings of his blessed Spirit, *hath talked to you by the way and opened to you his scriptures*? Let who will dispute the testimony of spiritual influences, on the soul, you know the reality of them, by a personal experience, too decidedly to question, but that the Son of God is come, as much now, in those secret visits of his grace, as when in the days of his flesh, he more openly *manifested forth his glory, and his disciples believed on him*.

And you no less, who are unconscious, of any operations of this kind, in your own soul, and perhaps are tempted therefrom, to dispute their existence, in the mind of others: yet explain to me if you can, upon any other principle, than the one I am contending for, that astonishing effect which you sometimes see, and therefore

cannot but acknowledge, to have taken place in the lives of many around you. From what cause is it, that the world behold them changed, from sin to righteousness, and from *the power of sin and Satan unto God*? If the scriptures declare, that it was *for this purpose, the Son of God was manifested that he might destroy the works of the Devil*; and you discover, that such consequences are really induced, in the conduct of *some* whom you know; that they, *who were once darkness are now light in the Lord*; and walk as *Children of the Light*: why should you question, the *cause*, when the *effect*, so loudly proclaims the correspondence to it? Say, if you can, and let reason be the arbiter in the decision, if the coming of the Son of God was to accomplish such purposes, and such purposes, are really accomplished, in the lives and conversation, of the faithful, in all ages; what better proof, can be desired, in confirmation of the fact? The Sun's warmth, which the blind man feels, ought to convince him, from what source that warmth is produced, though he never saw a ray of his brightness, to teach him that he gives light also.

How unavailable soever, this argument may be, to induce in you a similar change of heart, (and unavailable it must for ever prove, unless commissioned by a divine power) yet the fact cannot but be allowed, in
many

many instances to be indisputable. For bad as the world is and ready as it always will be, to ascribe such effects, to enthusiasm, and sometimes even to worse causes; yet malice itself, cannot in numberless examples dare to deny, but that there have been men in all ages of the Church, and, blessed be God, many living testimonies may be still found, of irreproachable conduct, which have ~~been~~ professed to be under the guidance of divine influences, and who *in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation shine as lights in the world.*

Such evidences of the blessed effects of grace in the heart, carry with them the most decisive conviction, that the God of all grace is come; and while they stamp, with an indelible seal, the assurance in the minds of the faithful themselves, they serve to illustrate and confirm that solemn scripture, which God hath left upon record, as an evidence to the ungodly; *whether they will hear or whether they will forbear yet they shall know that there hath been a prophet among them.*†

Before I dismiss the consideration of this first branch of my subject, I beg it may be understood, that while I am contending for the truth of this doctrine, that the Master is come, and is calling by the various methods of his word, and ordinances; I do not mean to intimate as if there had been no manifestation of the Lord Jesus, in
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the earlier ages of his Church, previous to his incarnation. This would be totally foreign to my meaning. So far I confess, is this from being my idea, that I venture to believe, and I think it would be no difficult matter to prove, the Lord Jesus, who it is well known hath been set up, for the purposes of redemption, as the Covenant God-man from everlasting, hath been manifesting himself, upon a great variety of occasions, in that character, in all periods of his Church. And if I were called upon, for any single evidence, in confirmation of it, I should without hesitation, refer to that very striking authority of the Apostle *John's*, in the opening of his gospel: where, when speaking of the Lord Jesus, he saith; *He was in the world and the world was made by him and the world knew him not.**

Hence therefore, if Jesus was in the world, and had a Church in the world, from the beginning, though the world knew him not, yet to his Church he was always known, and no doubt, to his people, he was continually manifesting himself, otherwise than he doeth to the world. What indeed are all those wonderful relations, we meet with, in the old testament scripture, of the appearance of the *Shechinah*, but proofs of this kind! Believers knew him, in his adorable character, and saw him, with the eye of faith, long before his incarnation. Multitudes of the heirs of promise, lived, and died, in the faith of the coming Saviour, as multitudes have since lived,

* John 1. 10.

lived, and died, in the faith of his finished salvation. They beheld by the eye of faith, the dawn of that glorious day of which we live, under the full meridian.

The Sun of the spiritual world, like the sun of the natural, though not risen above the horizon, in the full orb of his glory, had yet shed his beams sufficiently around, to indicate his approach, and to illumine the darkness. Hence, as an Apostle bears them record, *these all died in faith not having received the promises but having seen them afar off and embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.* ||

If I have said enough, in proof of my *first* proposition, that *the Master is come, and calleth*, in the various methods, of his word, and ordinances: I shall now proceed as was promised to the *second* consideration; namely, that the outward calls of the gospel, unaccompanied with a special, and inward power, must always lose their effect: like *Mary* in the text, until that call is personal and particular, there will remain a total insensibility, and indifference to all its demands.

When we consider the infinite importance of salvation, in the everlasting welfare of the soul, one might be led to suppose, that this alone, would occupy the great concern of man. That while

while the Redeemer is calling from his throne of glory in heaven, *look unto me and be ye saved all the ends of the earth*; every eye would be directed towards the place, from whence came the joyful sound. And while his Servants are following up the same blessed proclamation, in delivering his message on earth, that *Christ Jesus is come to save sinners*; every heart would be warmed, to receive with rapture, and thanksgiving, that *faithful saying which is indeed worthy of all acceptation*.

In natural things, such is universally the case. You never find many arguments necessary, in order to prevail upon a poor, naked creature, to accept a garment to cover him. Neither, will the hungry, or the thirsty, need much persuasion, to induce them to receive a supply to their wants. But in spiritual concerns, the sinner, who is totally void of all covering in himself, to appear before God, cannot be prevailed upon, by all the reasoning of men, to accept the robe of Jesus's righteousness, to clothe him: nor though perishing, will he take of the bread of life, or the water of life, notwithstanding, they are offered to him freely, *without money, and without price*.

That these things are so, will hardly I should suppose be questioned, for the matter is certainly too obvious, to admit dispute. But it will very naturally arise in the minds of the truly serious

rious, to enquire into the cause. Do such characters it may be asked, really believe, what all the ordinances of the Christian religion are supposed to teach, that they are sinners before God and have broken his righteous laws? Yes! Few men are hardy enough to suppose, but that *in many things they have sinned and come short of the glory of God.* But hath it been properly represented to them also, what is the sure consequence of these things? Yes! it is perfectly understood, and no man in the present day of knowledge, is supposed to be uninformed in this particular, that *the wages of sin is death:* and that *the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who hold the truth in unrighteousness.*

But it may yet be questioned further, hath the Gospel's gracious proclamation, of pardon, and peace, in the blood of the cross, been held forth to them, at the same time, as a full, free, and finished salvation? Yes! *Faithful* preachers of the word, are extremely cautious, that *they keep back nothing*, that is profitable to the people, but *daily both in the temple, and in every house, cease not to teach and to preach* in all his person and offices, *Jesus Christ.*

To what cause then, can it be ascribed, that total indifference, and that strange insensibility, which men manifest to divine things, and by which

which they live in the very midst of light, and knowledge, as without God in the world?

That there must be, some latent source of evil, wrapt up in the very heart of man, to induce such effects, in an endless succession, from age, to age; can hardly be a doubt. But mankind, would for ever have remained, both ignorant of the cause, and of the means of recovery, if God himself had not graciously interposed, and condescended to have given the information. He hath mercifully taught us, in his holy word, that man since the fall, is by nature, in a state of blindness, and darkness, and ignorance respecting divine things; and as unconscious, of the spiritual apprehension of any one object, of a spiritual nature, as if it had never been proposed to him.

From this unquestionable authority, we learn, that our first Father, when he lost his integrity, together with it, lost his knowledge of his Maker. And that this was the death, which in dying, he died. A spiritual, not a natural death; for as to animal faculties, and functions, he lived many years after, in the full enjoyment of them. But by this awful apostacy from God, he lost all *spiritual* knowledge of God. And begetting a Son in *his own likeness*, as it is said; that is, not in the likeness of his Maker, in which he was himself created, but in a fallen, faded, sinful, dark,

dark, and ignorant likeness, all his posterity, are by nature, partakers of the same.

Hence, though man possesseth the exercise of rational powers, and by the help of these, can reason even upon divine subjects, with a degree of accuracy which is sometimes astonishing; yet all the while, in respect to a real spiritual apprehension of those things, untaught by the Spirit of God, he will for ever remain unconscious of them. For his apprehension of these things, is derived from the information of others, not from any knowledge in himself: like one who relates a narrative of what he hath heard, not of what he himself hath known, or seen, like the *Pharisees* who beheld the miracles of Jesus, and therefore could not deny the facts; but though compelled to exclaim, *from whence hath this man this wisdom and these mighty works?* yet felt, no conviction to believe in him,

The Apostle *Paul*, in a single verse, of his inspired writings, hath both established the certainty of this doctrine, and explained the cause of it. *The natural man* (he says) *receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.** And as if to draw a line of discrimination, between persons of this description, and those of a contrary character, whose spiritual senses, are brought into life, and

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exercise,

*1 Cor. 2. 14.

exercise, *to discern both good and evil*, by the quickening operations of the Holy Ghost; he immediately adds, in the same verse, *but he that is spiritual judgeth all things*.

And hence, all those scriptures, which define the essential properties, between a state of unawakened, unregenerated nature, and that of grace; While the *one* is said to have *the understanding darkened being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them because of the blindness of their heart being past feeling and given over to work all uncleanness with greediness: nay even dead in trespasses and sins: the other*, is declared to be *renewed in the spirit of the mind and to be begotten again from dead works to serve the living and true God*.

It is, to this one source therefore, of our fallen nature, while remaining in an unawakened, unregenerated state, as to the fountain head of all our misery, we trace up the whole of that indifference, and insensibility, which mark the character of the world, in the rejection of the gospel. *The carnal mind is enmity against God for it is not subject to the law of God neither indeed can be so then they that are in the flesh cannot please God*. Hence, those very awful sights with which human life abounds. *Some like Mary sunk in sorrow. Others lost in care. Multitudes swallowed up, in the vortex of the world's pursuit: ambition, pleasure, wealth, and honor.*
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With many a strong, but ill founded confidence, that all shall terminate happily, though they know not how. And with as *many more*, a total disregard, whether it will or not.

Hence, though the Son of God is *come*, and *calleth* by his word, and by his ordinances: tho' *Wisdom standeth without and lifteth up her voice in the street*: neither invitations, nor entreaties, neither the sweet, melodious sounds of the gospel, nor the dreadful denunciations of the law; no, nor all the dispensations of providence, in the world, either in a way of mercy, or of judgment, will avail, until the same Almighty grace, which *calls*, graciously gives with that *call* a disposition to obey; and makes the Sinner *willing in the day of his power*. God hath drawn, this distinction, between the *outward* means of his grace, and the *inward* operation of his holy Spirit: and most decidedly taught, that the same hand, which formed the world, must be stretched forth, to frame the sinner's heart anew, or he will be dead, in trespasses, and sins, to all eternity.

It is not enough, as is evident, in the instance of *Mary* in the text, that the *Master is come* and that he *calleth* by the *outward* ministry of his word, or in any of the various methods of his providence, or grace; there must be an *inward* accompanying power, by a personal application, of the Spirit's work in the heart, to render it effectual. But when this glorious act of sovereignty

reignty is wrought in the soul, and the sinner is led to see that Jesus not only speaks, but speaks personally to him; then are the secrets of his heart made manifest, and like the man spoken of by the Apostle, *he falleth down upon his knees and will worship God and report that God was in that word of a truth.*†

I hope I shall have fully prepared your mind, by these observations, on the *former* branches of my subject, for what remains yet to be considered, under the *last* particular; namely, that when *the gospel is preached with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven* and is directed to the heart, with a special, and personal application; this manifests, that the Master is not only come, and calleth, but that he calleth for *thee*. And this part of our discourse, considered as connected with the happiness of the individual, becomes the most interesting of the whole.

If such effects, as I have described, under the preceding head of the subject, be induced by the fall, and man, really is, by nature, blind, and unconscious, of any one act of spiritual apprehension; nay even *dead in trespasses and sins*: nothing can be more evident, than that a recovery, from such a state if effected, must be all together supernatural; and consequently, the sole result of a divine power. None but He who created the soul can form the faculties of the soul anew. The same who at first commanded

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† 1 Cor. 14. 25.

light to shine out of darkness, *must shine in the heart to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.*

In the accomplishment of this act of mercy, God hath been pleased to appoint various means of grace, by way of conveying his energy to the soul: causing them to act as mediums, and instruments, to this purpose: yet still reserving to himself the sole efficient operation, to render them in every instance effectual. And this distinction is of all other points, the most essential to be preserved, in the mind, in order to form a just conclusion, between the *common* means of grace, simply considered as means, and the *special* application of them, when they are at any time rendered effectual, under the operation of the Holy Ghost. Gospel ordinances, how excellent soever they are in themselves, are but ordinances; and like the pool of *Bethesda*, or the pool of *Siloam*, possess no medicinal quality in themselves. They only become so, when commissioned by Him.

When the Apostle *Paul* preached the word to many, that came to him, unto his own lodgings, the result was, that *some believed* the things which were spoken, and *some believed not*. Whereas, had the efficacy depended, either upon the word, or the Preacher, certainly in all instances, the success would have been the same. And still, to mark this great point, with stronger precision,

precision, and to manifest from what source, the whole blessing must be derived; when the same Apostle, was made instrumental, to the Conversion of a certain woman of *Thyatira*, the reason is immediately added, *whose heart the Lord opened so that she attended to the things which were spoken by Paul.*

But what I am chiefly desirous at this time, to impress upon your mind, is this; that in every instance, where this divine work, is formed, in the heart, it must be *individually* exercised.

In religion, as in all matters of a secular nature, it is the right of property, which a man hath in it, which constitutes the value. General, unapplied mercies, never reach the heart. They must become special, personal, and particular. They must come, directed immediately to you, or to me, before that they will interest the affections of either. So that it is not enough, that the proclamation of mercy in the gospel, runs in those sweet words of invitation: *ho! every one that thirsteth come ye to the waters and drink!* The soul, however thirsty, will still be asking, is that call addressed to *me*? May I venture to come? Hence therefore, a conscious sense of a personal interest in all the privileges of the gospel, certainly forms the sweetest part of it. *Job* felt all this, when he said, I know that *my Redeemer* liveth and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth and though after my

my skin worms destroy this body yet in *my flesh* shall I see God whom *I* shall see for *myself* and *mine eyes* shall behold for *myself* and not another for me.

And *Paul* had the same personal consciousness, when he declared, that the life he then lived in the flesh he lived by the faith of the Son of God who loved *me* (said the Apostle) and gave himself for *me*. The most precious part, of the manifestation, which the Angel of the Covenant, made of himself to *Moses* at the bush, without all question was that, in which the Lord, called him by his name. Before *that* took place, what *Moses* saw, however it excited his wonder, and arrested his attention, yet, it did not become personally interesting. And I cannot but think, that when the *Jubilee* trumpet, sounded in the camp of *Israel*, however generally pleasing it might be, to every one, who knew how to appreciate the blessings of freedom; yet the sweetest note, vibrated on the captive's ear. He *knew*, though he had never heard it before, *the joyful sound*.

If your ideas correspond with mine, that this consciousness of a personal interest in the Master's call, is of all others the most important point, to be attended to, by every individual; the question will immediately arise out of it, by what means shall it be known? And the answer

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is as direct. The secret, still, small voice, in which the Lord speaks personally to the heart, like the unknown source of the air, which bloweth where it listeth, is discoverable only by its effects. *We hear the sound thereof, and we see its operation, but we cannot tell whence it cometh nor whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.*

It is from the sacred impressions left upon the mind, we infer the call of God. And when those impressions are clearly traced, which the scriptures teach us to expect, from the awakening voice of the Master, there can be no more reason, to question the reality of the voice having been heard, than when in the case of *Samuel*, the Lord called him, *Eli perceived*, (though he heard it not) *that the Lord had called the Child.**

Respecting the marks, and characters, by which this is to be known, the Lord Jesus himself, hath given some very striking outlines, to form a general judgment by, which if closely attended to, will keep from every error. Under the office of a Shepherd, and in which, Christ considers his people as sheep, he saith; *the sheep hear his voice; and he calleth his own sheep by name; and leadeth them forth and they follow him.* § Here are certain particularities in these few words, which at once serve to explain the matter.

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* 1 Sam. 3. 8.

§ John 10. 3. 4.

They hear his voice. That is, they distinguish the voice of Jesus, in the word. *Never man spake like this man.* It comes home directed with energy to the heart. It is *in demonstration of the spirit and of power.* And the effects of it, prove from what direction it comes. For it awakens, it animates, it influenceth the whole Man, and is accompanied with a life-giving, a soul-enriching power. So that every one who hears it, is constrained to say, with *David*. *I shall never forget thy precepts for with them thou hast quickened me.* †

He calleth his own sheep by name. That is, the word is so applied personally to the heart, by the Holy Ghost, and with an emphasis so very striking: it speaks so exactly to his own case, and circumstances, as if he, and he alone, was concerned in it, and called to by name.

He leadeth them forth and they follow him. That is, from the very evident charge, wrought in the life and conversation, the most incontestible evidences are afforded, that they are under the leadings, and teachings, of his holy Spirit: and being called with an *holy calling*, they are enabled *to walk worthy of the vocation*, and *to follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.*

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† Psalm 119. 93.

Hence therefore wherever these effects are found, we have as full an assurance, that true believers in the present hour, hear the voice of the Master, arise at that call and follow him in the regeneration: as when in the days of his flesh, he called *Zaccheus* from the tree, or *Matthew* from the receipt of custom.

May I not venture to add, that there are *some* who hear me this Day, concerning whom, I am fully persuaded it may be said, that these truths are living principles in their experience; and to whom the words of the Lord Jesus, may be strictly applied. *Blessed are your eyes for they see and your ears for they hear.*

Nothing can be more gratifying to those who minister in holy things, than the consciousness that *our gospel cometh not unto you in word only but also in power and in the holy Ghost and in much assurance.*

And how very sweet a testimony that is in reply which I am well convinced many of you can, and do give, when like the *Samaritans* to the woman who had reported to them concerning Jesus, you say as they did: *now we believe not because of thy saying for we have heard him ourselves and know that this is indeed the Christ the Saviour of the world.**

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* John 4. 42.

I will detain you no longer, than only to beg, that you will not forget, the very earnest, and pressing claims, our subject hath, upon the different characters, which more, or less, make up every religious congregation.

My poor unawakened Brother! *You* who are not only unconscious of any personal interest in the Master's call, but are altogether unconcerned about it: forgive me when I say, my fears are greatly exercised on your account: and especially for such among you, as have long sat under a preached gospel, lest after all, you should have received *the grace of God*, (in the means of it) *in vain*. Indeed, indeed, there is but too much reason to fear. And what the Lord Jesus in the days of his flesh told the Jews, may be equally said to many nominal Christians. *Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape. And ye have not his word abiding in you.* §

Hath it never struck you, how very awful a situation that man stands in, who though the Master be come, and is for ever calling in his word, and in his ordinances, yet remains through life insensible to the call; and at length departs out of it, as unconscious and unconcerned, as though it had never been made!

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It will be a distinguishing mercy if the renewed call of this day, should be accompanied with a divine power. Gracious God! Commission, if it be thy blessed will the *outward* means with an *inward* effect, to the heart of some poor unawakened Sinner present, and give him an experimental evidence of the truth of the doctrine, that he may know that the Master is indeed come, and calleth personally for *him*.

Our subject in its application is peculiarly consolatory and encouraging also, to every humble soul, who fears that he hath never heard, but most ardently desires to know, *the joyful sound*.

It is more than probable, I may be speaking, before *some* of this description, and I would therefore beg to drop a word by way of inference to them.

You fear, that your unworthiness is a disqualification, and that some previous merit is necessary towards the attainment of it. But do my Brother, learn to correct such unbecoming notions of God's mercy. If human merit was made the standard of divine favor, what flesh could then be saved? It is a precious consideration, which the scriptures teach, and
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I do beg of you, to cherish it with all possible warmth in your affection; that He who gives the grace, gives also the disposition to accept the grace. He both prepares the blessing, and prepares the heart to receive the blessing. *I am sought of them that asked not for me* (is the language of mercy) *I am found of them that sought me not.* *I said behold me behold me unto a nation that was not called by my name.**

Had any *preparation* been needful, who less prepared than *Matthew* or *Zaccheus* or the woman of *Samaria*? Had any *merit* been required, who so unlikely to find acceptance as the Apostle *Paul*? Doth not indeed, every example of the kind, we meet with in scripture, tend but to prove, that *it is not of him that willeth nor of him that runneth but of God that sheweth mercy?*

Happy will it be if while you are thus waiting on God in the appointed ways of his grace, that very sweet scripture be fulfilled in your experience; *Therefore doth the Lord wait that he may be gracious unto you and therefore will he be exalted that he may have mercy upon you: for the Lord is a God of judgment blessed are all they that wait for him. §*
And

* Isaiah 65. 1. § Isaiah 30. 18.

And for you brethren, *partakers of the heavenly calling*, as you cannot but be truly sensible, that your *first* call to God, was not the result of your own merit; so I trust you are equally convinced, that neither is your present continuance in grace, the effect of your own goodness. Had the Lord laid *judgment to the line and righteousness to the plummet*; or been extreme to *mark what is done amiss*, either before, or since, he hath manifested himself towards you, where would have been your portion?

You know full well, I am persuaded, the meaning of that blessed scripture, and can enter into an heart-felt enjoyment of it. *Who hath saved us and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.* To you I would only beg to make this one observation. While you are ever ready to ascribe all to *the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made you accepted in the beloved*; never lose sight of that comfortable assurance, that *whom the Lord hath called, them he also justifieth, and whom he justifieth them he also glorified.*

I add no more, but the affectionate words of the Apostle: *To them that are sanctified by God the Father and preserved in Christ Jesus and called: mercy unto you and peace and love be multiplied.* †

† Jude 1. 2.

Sermon 4.

THE SHILOH COME, AND THE GATHERING OF
THE PEOPLE UNTO HIM, PROVED.

Genesis, 49th Chap. 10th Verse.

*The Sceptre shall not depart from Judah nor a
lawgiver from between his feet until Shiloh come
and unto him shall the gathering of the People be.*

AMONG the many evidences, which God
the Holy Ghost hath caused to be left on
record, of his gracious superintendance, over
his Church, and people, from the earliest ages;
that is by no means the least considerable,
which ariseth out of the spirit of prophecy. An
Apostle tells us, and with a plainness of lan-
guage not to be mistaken, that *prophecy came
not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of
old spake as they were moved, by the Holy Ghost.*†
And

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† 2 Peter 1. 21.

And from the same unquestionable authority we learn, that what those saints of God delivered, in reference either to the Person, or Offices, of the Lord Jesus, it was the *spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified before hand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.* *

It would form indeed a very interesting subject, to trace the marks, of the Spirit's impressions, on the minds of his servants the Prophets, in the multiform instances of it, with which the scriptures abound, in the early ages. And which might very easily be done, in only taking comparative views, of the predictions they delivered, with their accomplishment. But such a service, however gratifying, would not come within the limits of a single sermon. Elsewhere, I have more largely prosecuted, the pleasing study, and shewn, that during the whole period of the Church's history, before the incarnation of the Lord Jesus, the Holy Ghost, was neither an inattentive, nor inactive Spectator, to its best interests. § The same great object, of glorifying the Lord Jesus, occupied the divine mind. Hence, the ministry of the Holy Ghost, was as much called forth, from the earliest period, in awakening the faith, and expectation, of the Saints of God, to the coming of the Redeemer;

as

* 1 Peter 1. 11. § See 2nd. Sermon on the Deity
and operations of the Holy Ghost.

as his grace is now exercised, since redemption work hath been finished, in *taking of the things of Jesus* to shew unto them.

The text is an instance of the exercise of his divine power, upon the mind of the Patriarch *Jacob*, in one of the most illustrious, and glorious prophecies, the scriptures of the old testament affords.

The Patriarch well knowing that the promised blessing of redemption, in the covenant-engagements of JEHOVAH, was deposited with him, and his seed ; finding the hour of nature's dissolution approaching, convened his household together, that he might communicate to them, the great events, connected with this covenant-promise of God, made to *Abraham* his father, which would *befall them in the latter days*.

No doubt, the Patriarch felt the divine influence on his mind, at this interesting interview, with his children; and though the natural feelings of the Parent frequently mingled the affectionate expressions of a dying Father, with those of an higher nature; yet he was conscious, the principle points he had to deliver to them, were in the spirit of prophecy.

Amidst many other precious promises, connected with redemption, which God the Holy Ghost, influenced the mind of *Jacob* to speak of, and which were addressed to each tribe of his family, as their respective households hereafter to be formed, became more, or less interested in them; this of the text, to his Son *Judah* appears eminently conspicuous. Standing as it were, on the very brink of the invisible world, and beholding the great objects, now about to be fully realized to his view, which by faith, he had so long walked in the personal enjoyment of; the dying Patriarch, breaks out into an holy fervour of joy in the contemplation; and exclaims, *the Sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the People be,*

What *Jacob* himself understood, of the glorious events comprised in this prophecy, is not difficult to discover. The Almighty *Shiloh*, of whom he spake, had been clearly revealed to him, as the covenant God-man *his Redeemer*, long before. This, the Prophet *Hosea*, who lived a thousand Years after *Jacob*, confirms by the most positive assurance. *He found him* (saith the Prophet) *in Bethel, and there he spake with us, even the Lord God of Hosts, Jehovah* (that is in a covenant-way) *is his memorial.* * Evidently alluding, to that memorable period, in the Patriarch's life, when God revealed him-
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* Hosea 12. 4. 5.

self to him at *Bethel*, as the God which had entered into covenant with his Father *Abraham*, and now appeared to confirm it personally to *Jacob*, that *in his seed, all the families of the earth should be blessed.*

And that the Patriarch himself, considered this vision of God to him, at that time, in this sense, is as evident, from the dying testimony he gave of it to his Son *Joseph*. *God Almighty appeared unto me* said Jacob at *Luz in the land of Canaan and blessed me.* † that is, blessed him with covenant mercy, covenant assurance, of redemption, hereafter to be completed, in the Person, of the promised seed. So that it was not, God blessing him, simply in the abstract of his *providence*, but in a way of *grace*, in that very way indeed, of the covenant-engagement of *redemption*, into which *Jehovah* had entered.

And hence the Patriarch, connecting in his mind, his *first* knowledge of redemption, manifested to him at *Bethel*, with the *last* intimations of it, under the Spirit's influence, now dying as he was in *Egypt* : and gathering up into one mass of particulars, the whole of those precious discoveries, which God had made of himself, in a Covenant-way through all the intermediate stages of life ; added this testimony more to all, that he had before received, and pointed to this leading character, by which, it should be known, when the Redeemer would be manifested.

Speaking

† Genesis 48. 3.

Speaking under the immediate inspiration of God the Holy Ghost, he comforts his Children, in the moment of his departure, and through them, the Church at large, with this delightful assurance, that *the Sceptre* which God would establish in the family of his Son *Judah*, *should not depart from Judah nor a lawgiver from between his feet* until this long promised, long expected *Shiloh*, in whose Almighty hands, all the concerns of salvation were placed, *should come, and unto whom the gathering of the People should be.*

Suffer me to pause one moment, over this view of the Patriarch's life, just to remark, that *early*, and *latter* manifestations, of the Lord Jesus, to his People in a Covenant-way, are not confined to *Jacob's* history. Blessed be God thousands since his day, have known by heart-felt experience, the sweetness of *both* seasons, and have been enabled therefrom, if not with equal strength, at least with equal satisfaction, *to set to their seal that God is true.*

First intimations of grace, are very precious things to the soul. And so are the *last* tokens of divine love. It is difficult to say, which are the sweetest. Perhaps, from the nature, and unexpected manifestation of the blessing to the heart, the *former* will be most prized. Yet the *latter* certainly make up in fulness and in value, what is wanting in beauty. It should seem, that when

when through a life of some considerable extent the man of grace, can sit down with *Jacob*, and recount the manifestations of God's love, in a Covenant-way, marking his path in a multitude of instances, as he hath gone along, that such views must afford, the highest comfort to the soul.

But do you my Brother, determine the point for yourself, *you* who know much of the Lord's dealings with your soul. I trust there are not a few here present who if called upon, can bear large testimony to the faithfulness of a Covenant-God, as a tried, and approved God, all the way through.

And shall I venture to say to all such, that I hope you do not write those mercies, which are certainly the most precious of all mercies on water, but that their remembrance live in the warmest place of your heart. Treasuring up such records, will enable you under the Spirit's influence when dying, to comfort those around you, as he did, with the assurance of God's unchanging love. And certainly this effect you will find from it, to your own consolation: for the believer, who hath all along through life, accustomed himself to mark down, the mercies of God to his soul, will not want a mercy to praise him for in his death. And I believe I may venture to add, that many followers of
Jesus,

Jesus, have begun the life of glory, in the very moment, when grace hath been consummating; and ere the praises of a faithful Covenant-God hath ceased to move, upon the trembling lips of their dying body; the soul, hath caught the note of the saints above, and joined in the everlasting song, of *salvation to God and the Lamb.*

But to return from this digression. What I am chiefly interested in, at this time, is to consider, the accomplishment of this illustrious prophecy of *Jacob*, in the text, as referring to the Person, and Offices, of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in him, having its completion.

In the prosecution of this service, the arrangement I mean to be guided by, as far as God the Holy Ghost shall be pleased to enable me, will be, in the *first* place, to prove, that the period in this memorable prophecy, so many ages predicted, before its proposed accomplishment, hath at length arrived, and long since expired; and in the Advent, and Ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ, hath been fulfilled, and is now fulfilling in the earth: that *the Sceptre did not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until the Shiloh came*; and by departing, in that very season, when Christ was manifested, this prophecy was then so accomplished, as never can be accomplished in any other.

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When I have performed this service, I shall then *secondly*, endeavour to explain, what is meant, by the gathering of the people unto him, and from whence I trust will appear also additional evidences, to the confirmation of this ancient prophecy.

And I very earnestly pray God, that our attention to this subject, may be so graciously accompanied, by the teachings of the Holy Ghost, that the hearts of many who hear me, may be led to *see*, in Jesus the *Shiloh* of his people: and still more to *feel* their personal interest, of being *gathered unto him*. And may the Lord at the same time, mercifully grant, that all his household present, who are already brought nigh unto him in a way of grace, may be the more *stablished, strengthened, and settled*, in this hope of the Gospel, and built up firmly in their most holy faith.

According to my *first* proposal, I am to prove that the period so long predicted, for the manifestation of the *Shiloh* hath expired, and in the Person, and Ministry of the Lord Jesus, this memorable Scripture hath had its accomplishment.

In the opening of this branch of our subject, it may not be improper, to explain the meaning

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of the word *Shiloh*; as one among the many significant names of the *Messiah*: and which, as the name of a person, is no where else to be found, but in this text, in all the sacred writings.

The Jews themselves, though by a strange fatality, denying the advent of the *Shiloh*, readily allow, that in this prophecy of their Father *Jacob*, the *Messiah* is clearly meant; and that the Office, which was to mark his character, when he came, was very properly distinguished by this appellation.

The word *Shiloh*, may without violence to the original, be considered as implying the *Son*: and if accepted in this sense, it will mean, that *the Son of the Lord shall come*. Perhaps, it may also be equally rendered, *Shiloh the peaceable one*. And in this idea, it will of course refer to the object he came to accomplish; *peace on earth good will among men*. But I rather think, the word itself, is taken from a root in the original, signifying to *deliver*; and hence the *Shiloh* will mean the *deliverer*. And what could be more descriptive, or significant of his Person, and Office, who when he came on earth, came on purpose to *deliver his people from the wrath to come*.*

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* 1 Thess. 1. 10.

The Prophet *Isaiah*, ages after this perdition of the Patriarch *Jacob* looking forward unto Gospel times, declared, that *the Redeemer should come unto Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob.* § Which passage of the Prophet, the Apostle *Paul* without hesitation, applies to the person of the Lord Jesus, and in doing it, confirms at once, the pleasing assurance, that this Redeemer is the *Deliverer* which should turn away *ungodliness from Jacob.* † And without all question, the advent of the *Messiah* as the Redeemer, or Deliverer, of his People, is the sum, and substance, of all the promises, and predictions, of Scripture; and which all the believing Jews, at the time of Christ's appearing, it is said, *looked for of redemption in Israel.* ||

Concerning this Almighty Deliverer, this *Shiloh*; Jacob, under the influence of prophecy, declared, that *the Sceptre should not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until he came.*

We cannot be at a loss to apprehend what is meant by the *Sceptre*, and the *Lawgiver*. Both terms, are clearly expressive of one, and the same thing; and mean to say, that the administration of Justice, with the ensign of regal power, in a way of government, and protection, should exist in the family of *Judah*; and there

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continue,

§ *Isaiah* 59. 20.† *Romans* 11. 26.|| *Luke* 2. 38.

continue, until the whole was accomplished, by the appearance of him, in whom all the prophecies had their completion.

And in confirmation of this part of the prophecy, it is worthy observation, that the Sceptre of regal authority, began in the tribe of *Judah*, in the Person of *David*; and in a long series of years, continued uninterruptedly, until the *Shiloh* actually came. For though during the *Babylonish* captivity, the ensigns of Government, seemed to have been tarnished, yet the vestige of authority still remained. There were Governors among the heads of the families, which were carried away captive, as appears from their history, who exercised their prerogative, in the peculiarities of the Jewish law. Neither did they cease, even when *Judea* became a Roman province. For tho' subject to the Government of the Romans, the *Sanhedrim* exercised their peculiar privileges still; and upon that memorable occasion, when the Lord Jesus was arraigned at the bar of *Pilate*, and he from a conscious assurance of Christ's innocence, was disposed to let him go; the Jews made this remarkable expression; *We have a law and by our law he ought to die because he made himself the Son of God.* *

Hence therefore it plainly appears, that the Sceptre did not depart until the *Shiloh* came. But that it did then totally cease, is as fully
proved,

* John 19. 7.

proved, from the records of Sacred, and Profane history. For added to the particular relation we have, of the overthrow of *Judea*, by *Titus Vespasian's* Army, that unconscious testimony, which the Jews themselves gave, to their situation, stamps the whole. For upon the same occasion as the former, when *Pilate* tauntingly said unto the Jews, *shall I crucify your King?* the Chief Priests answered, *we have no King but Cæsar.* §

How blind, how short sighted, the policy of man! In the very moment, that the Jews by this declaration, intended to deny Jesus, for the *Messiah*; by the confirmation of this illustrious prophecy, concerning him, they most effectually acknowledged him. And the very circumstance, by which they meant to overthrow the authority of the Redeemer, tended more effectually, to establish, and confirm it.

And hence that prophecy of *Hosea* how remarkably fulfilled! *The children of Israel, shall abide many days, without a King, and without a Prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim.* † And thus you see them at this hour, dispersed as they are, in every quarter of the earth. Every Jew you meet, carries an evidence in himself, of the confirmation of the whole. And in whatever part of the habitable earth they are

§ John 19. 15. † Hosea 3. 4.

are found, they have lost the Sceptre of *Judah*. They are *without a King*. For they have no civil government of their own. Neither have they a *a Prince*, to go in, and out, before them. They have *no sacrifice*; that is, no Altar, on which to offer sacrifice; none of the *five* signs of the temple. *No Image*, or pillar of commemoration. *No Ephod, or Teraphim*: neither *Urim, nor Thummim*, remaining. For though in many countries, they are tolerated with Synagogues, yet the real Temple service is over. They have no Prophets to instruct, and neither Altars to approach God by sacrifice: and neither *ephod*, or *teraphim*, as mediums, to receive communications from him. Nothing indeed remaining, but the fullest indications, that God hath accomplished his purposes concerning them, and scattered them, as he had said, amidst all the nations of the earth.

Who can read those scriptures, and behold their denunciations so awfully fulfilled, unmoved. Who but must feel for God's ancient People, when we call to mind, that *to them pertained the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises: whose are the fathers, and of whom, as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all God blessed for ever.* *

You,

* Romans 9. 4. 5.

You, that have received *the spirit of adoption, whereby you cry Abba Father*: that can look back, and recollect, when you were *enemies to God by wicked works aliens to the common wealth of Israel having no hope and without God in the world*: Is it possible for you to reflect, on the happy state, into which you are now brought, in being gathered to your Almighty *Shiloh*, without admiring, the wonders of redeeming grace; and without feeling, the rising thankfulness in the heart, towards the Great Author of them? Can any man indeed stand convinced, of the truth of what the Apostle hath said; that *the fall of them is the riches of the world and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles*: and remain insensible, to a mercy so distinguishing?

Blessed be the divine benignity! there is a promise yet remaining, to be accomplished concerning this people; and a glorious one it is. *Afterward* (saith the same Prophet who predicted their deprivation of all government civil and religious) *Afterward shall the Children of Israel return and seek the Lord their God and David their King and shall fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter days.* †

And will not the believer in the expectation of the accomplishment of this blessed promise implore the mercy seat for them, and say, Lord hasten the time for the latter-day glory, when
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† Hosea 3. 5.

thou wilt call home thy banished ones from afar; when *the Deliverer shall arise out of Zion to turn away ungodliness from Jacob!* When *the fulness of the Gentiles shall be completed and all Israel be saved!* And when both Jew and Gentile shall be brought into one fold under one Shepherd Jesus Christ the righteous.

I proceed now to the second object proposed, namely, to explain, what is meant by the gathering of the people unto him, in the certainty of the effect and the Persons who are expressly said to be gathered.

In this branch of my discourse, I desire you to remark with me, the particular form of expression made use of, *unto him shall the gathering of the people be.* From whence you perceive, that the event is not left to hazard, or uncertainty, but it is spoken of, as a fixed and determined thing, it *shall* be. And when you consider in what infinite resources the assurance is founded; that it is the result of an eternal counsel, formed in the divine mind, in which each of the Persons of the Godhead concur, to bring forward its establishment; the Father's sovereign grace; the Redeemer's inestimable purchase; and the Holy Ghost's effectual application: what shall possibly arise, to frustrate those united operations? If Jehovah saith, to Him shall the gathering of the People be, who shall say nay? *His counsel must stand and he will do all his pleasure.*

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Of all subjects which can employ the mind of man, and call into exercise his intellectual faculties, the contemplation of this fundamental truth, in the certainty of his salvation, is without all doubt the highest, and the best.

That it must be the sole work of God, to gather his people to himself, is a doctrine, to which the humble soul, when once brought under divine teachings, will easily be led to acknowledge. But to trace the distinct, and peculiar acts, of each person in the Godhead, in order to form a clear conception, of the personal operations of each to confirm and make it sure; to teach us also, how much we stand in need of the peculiar aids of each, so as to call up suitable waitings, and to awake suitable acknowledgments, to all; these points form, not only a subject to give firmness to the soul, but serve to open at the same time, a source of the greatest consolation, and holy joy, the mind is capable of feeling, in the present state of things.

The distinct act of *choosing*, and *laying* the *foundation*, for the salvation of sinners, and *appointing* the means for the accomplishment; in giving the Son to be the Saviour of the world; and his people to the Son; these acts are peculiarly ascribed in Scripture, to God the Father. *Blessed* (says the Apostle) *be the God and Father*

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of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings, in heavenly places in Christ, according as he hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world. §

The actual work of *redemption*, is as expressly declared, to be the part of God the Son; and the purchase of his righteousness and blood. And hence all the privileges of the covenant are said to be the *sure mercies* of David. *We have redemption through his blood even the forgiveness of sins. **

But the effectual application in every individual instance of it, to the soul is the Spirit's operation, from beginning to end. And hence called, *a renewing of the Holy Ghost shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour. †*

Thus all the persons of the Godhead, have their distinct, and peculiar operations, in the great work of redemption. And each graciously contributes, to the accomplishment of the blessed purpose. So that a channel of communication is opened, for the apprehension, and enjoyment of each, personally and individually: and yet at the same time, the soul never loseth sight, of that fundamental doctrine, *that these three are one.*

But

§ Ephes. 1. 3. 4.

* Ephes. 1. 7.

† Titus 3. 5. 6.

But while contemplating the security, the faithful possess, in this delightful assurance; what I would more immediately desire you to observe, in the promise of the text, is, the character of those to whom it is to extend.

They are said to be, *the people*, that is not a people; but a specific character is given them *the people*. Not a people first gathered, and then formed; but antecedent to any thing on their part, they are already formed, and now gathered.

And to define this still more, the term is elsewhere varied, and they are called *thy people*. God the Father is introduced, by the spirit of prophecy, as addressing the Son, in that memorable scripture, and promising the certainty of their being gathered to Christ, by the operation of the divine will. *Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power.* †

And, as if all this was not enough, in order to ascertain the fact, in another scripture, which was directed to announce both the name, and the office, of the Lord Jesus before his incarnation, he is introduced, under this express mention of him: Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save *his* people from their sins. Here they are particularly marked, as belonging to the Redeemer, even before his incarnation and though expressly said to be in

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sins,

† Psalm. 110. 3.

sins, yet this became no hindrance to his right in them. *His* people they were, though a sinful rebellious people. *Children of God* by the right of covenant redemption in grace, though by nature *children of wrath* and meriting wrath *as much as others*. This destroyed not their relationship, to their Covenant-head, how unworthy soever they were in themselves. Concerning them he had said, *surely they are my people, children that will not lie so he was their Saviour*. In all their affliction, he was afflicted, and the Angel of his presence saved them, in his love, and in his pity, he redeemed them, and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old. And the same blessed Scripture sweetly adds, that though they rebelled against him, and vexed his holy spirit, and he turned for a time to be their enemy, and fought against them, yet he remembered the days of old Moses and his people. And therefore the Prophet introduceth him, as calling upon himself, and all the perfections of the Godhead, to arise for their deliverance; because he was engaged to them in this relationship, *as their father their Redeemer from everlasting* †

From the authority of those united testimonies of scripture, and confirmed to us as it is, by the general analogy of the divine word throughout; I do not hesitate to conclude, that the people promised to be gathered unto the *Shiloh*, at his appearing,

† Isaiah 63. 8. 9. 11. 16.

appearing are a specific people, in express distinction to the world, out of which they are said to be taken. Hence they are called *his children*, whom the Father hath given him. *His sheep*, for whom he laid down his life. *His seed*, to whom all the promises are made. And what a precious scripture is that of the Prophet in confirmation of the whole of this doctrine, where he takes up the same character of God's people as *his sheep*, and represents the Redeemer, as the Great *Shepherd* coming into the world to seek and save his wanderers: and thus he speaks, *Thus saith the Lord God; Behold I, even I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out. As a shepherd seeketh out his flock, in the day that he is among his sheep, that are scattered; so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places, where they have been scattered, in the cloudy, and dark day. And I will bring them out from the people, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land, and feed them upon the mountains of Israel, by the rivers and in all the inhabited places of the country. And after many more sweet promises, to the same effect, he adds; Thus shall they know, that I, the Lord their God, am with them, and that they, even the house of Israel, are my people, saith the Lord God. †* And hence, in conformity to this, when the Lord Jesus sent forth his servants, to act under his Commission, the direction was; *go ye to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.*

And

† Ezek. 34. 12. 13. 20.

And this view of our subject, will receive, yet a further confirmation, from that memorable passage of scripture in the prophecy of *Caiaphas* the High Priest. Indeed in its scope, and design, it corresponds to that of the Patriarch *Jacob* in our text: and when compared together will be found mutually to illustrate, and explain each other. *And one of them, (saith the Evangelist) named Caiaphas, being the high Priest that same year, said unto them, ye know nothing at all nor consider, that it is expedient, that one man should die for the people; and that the whole nation perish not. And this spake he(the Evangelist adds as an observation particularly to be noticed) not of himself, but, acting in his public character as the high Priest he prophesied, that Jesus should die for that nation, and not for that nation only, but that he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad. †*

Here is at once, the plainest, and fullest confirmation, of the whole doctrine. To give the words all the importance they were intended to answer, the Evangelist tells us, that this time serving Priest, was not conscious at the time he spake, of the meaning of his own words. What he said, was not of himself but the Holy Ghost speaking in him, and by him, to the Church. And the blessed doctrine, this man as a channel of communication, was made to

† John 11. 49. 52.

to convey, was the most momentous, of all doctrines: namely that by the death of the Lord Jesus, his people were all redeemed, both Jew, and Gentile, and became *fellow heirs, and of the same body and partakers of God's promise in Christ by the Gospel*. And moreover, that as both Jew and Gentile, were heirs together, of this redemption, at a time, when they were all alike unconscious of it, and neither knew their misery, nor the gracious provision for their recovery, their gathering in would not be the result of their own wisdom, but the sole effect of his power. He, this Almighty *Shiloh*, would gather together in one the Children of God, which were scattered abroad. For *children, they were, though scattered*. He doth not say they shall be first gathered to him, and then, become his children: first made worthy of his favor, and then receive it. But *as children, gathered to him, from all places whither they have been scattered*. It is *because ye are sons*, (saith the Apostle) that *God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts*. It is because they are *his people* that Jesus saveth them from their sins. Because they are *thine*, (saith God himself concerning them) *they shall be willing in the day of thy power*. And hence, when the Redeemer is represented, by one of the Prophets, as returning from redemption work, to the bosom of his Father, and presenting himself, and the souls he had redeemed, as a Conqueror, returning with the spoil before him, he is introduced,

duced, as saying, *Behold I and the children whom the Lord hath given me.* †

Here let us pause, and as one ascending an high hill of observation, look back and survey the ground over which we have trodden, before we look around to the delightful view, which is opening before us, on every side, in the pleasing prospect of contemplation it affords.

How infinitely important, must have been that glorious purpose of redemption, which for so many ages, occupied the divine mind ; and for the keeping alive the expectation of it, in the Church of God, such a multitude of years before its proposed accomplishment, so wonderful an apparatus was made use of!

What a world of preparation, do we find ministering to this one event, from the very dawn of revelation, in the various representations by which it was shadowed !

In the instance of our text, we behold a spirit of prophecy, delivered near two thousand years; before the *Shiloh* came, as expressly pointing to the Lord Jesus Christ, as if written on the spot, in the very moment of his appearing. And now
near

† Isaiah 8. 18.

near two thousand more, have run out, since the *Shiloh* actually came, we find in this hour, the other part of the prophecy, in the gathering his people unto him, (which of course was to have a gradual accomplishment) still fulfilling with as much faithfulness, and precision, as if the prediction had been but of yesterday. Well might *He* of whom these things were al spoken, and to whom they all ministered, be called *Wonderful Counsellor!* And well may every beholder, in correspondence to the same language, exclaim with the Apostle, *Oh the depths of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things, to whom be glory for ever; Amen.*

The result of all that hath been said, will be to recommend my several hearers, from the *outward* testimony, of the doctrine itself, to search diligently, for the *inward* evidence in their own hearts, by way of ascertaining the personal interest every one hath in it.

Upon the presumption the *Shiloh* be come, (which I venture to hope I have fully proved,) and the great object of his mission be, the gathering of his people unto him; (which is his well known office and character;) there cannot be a question, of equal importance in the breast of every individual, than whether that blessed effect be accomplished in his own instance?

I know that while with the multitude of thoughtless, and inconsiderate persons, an enquiry of this nature is lightly made, and as lightly answered by their vain minds; with many precious souls it becomes an anxious question indeed. They are exercised with continual fears, and apprehensions upon it; and like the disciples at the Sepulchre of Jesus, they are doubting, the reality of their own senses, in the very moment of receiving the most absolute proof.

In the province of my duty, there is nothing in which I hold myself so much a debtor, as to endeavour the relieving under God's grace, the apprehensions of the timid believer, and especially upon a point of so much consequence. For this is what scripture calls, *lifting up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, and saying to them that are of a fearful heart be strong.*

Perhaps, I may be speaking before one of this description. And if so, I cannot more profitably follow up the subject itself, than by offering an observation, or two, which through the blessed Spirit's teaching, may enable such a mourner in Zion, to discover his interest more clearly; and lead him home in a happier frame of mind, than when he came here. And in accomplishing this purpose, I shall

shall not be going out of the way, in furnishing the outlines of examination also, for any others present, who feel a rising inclination, to ascertain a point of so much consequence, as a personal knowledge of their being gathered unto our Almighty *Shiloh*.

Now there is a sweet promise of God on this subject, which I could wish every humble soul, always if possible, to keep in view. *Therefore (saith God) my people shall know my name therefore they shall know in that day that I am he that doth speak behold it is I.** Here then, the Lord himself engages, that his people *shall* know his name; that they shall distinguish his voice and discern his speaking from all others.

And in allusion to the express doctrine of the Covenant, one of the principal features of it was to be thus distinguished. *I will be their God and they shall be my people. Neither shall they teach any more every man his neighbour and every man his brother saying know the Lord for they shall all know me from the least of them unto the greatest of them.*

Hence therefore, from such positive assurances, we may very safely conclude, that the same God, that thus freely promiseth, will

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* Isaiah 52. 6.

adopt suitable means, for the certain accomplishment of his promise: and not suffer, his gracious intentions to be frustrated, by any intervening causes. And if you, my Brother, are among the number of God's people, and will only open the word of God, and carefully examine the marks, and characters, by which his people are to be known; and then take a comparative view of them, with your own heart; you will find, such an happy correspondence, between both, as will tend to confirm the assurance of God's promises, and bring the fullest satisfaction to the heart, that you are interested in them.

In the words of our text, they are only distinguished by the general expression of *the people*: but in other parts of scripture, their names, and the feature of their character, are marked, with a more striking particularity. They are said (as hath been before noticed) to be the *sheep* of Christ; the *children* of God: *His people*, which he hath formed for himself; and which he hath chosen to be a *special people*, above all people, that are upon the face of the earth: the *seed* also of the Redeemer, with whom the covenant blessings are deposited. But though sheep, yet *strayed* sheep: *all we like sheep* (saith the Prophet) *have gone astray*. Though children: yet *rebellious* children. *Ye have been rebellious* (saith Moses) *against the Lord unto this day*. Though the *people* of God and the *seed* of Christ,
yet

yet a *sinful* people, laden with iniquity a seed of evil doers children that are corrupters that have forsaken the Lord provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger and are gone away backward.

Now this is the uniform character, and these are the universal features, of the Lord's family, in their natural, unawakened, and unregenerated state. And hence the Apostle says, *God be thanked that ye were the servants of sin but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine delivered unto you.*

To this, I am very confident, you whose hearts are bowed down, with the sense of sin, will bear ample testimony, and that this corresponds to the state you were born in. And do not forget this one precious consideration, while subscribing to this doctrine, that as by virtue of this, you prove your relationship to the *first* Adam, it was to his fallen race, the promises of redemption, through the *second* Adam, was made. And as you manifest by nature, the stock from whence you sprung in *generation*, so by grace, you are equally enabled to prove your relationship by grace in *regeneration*.

Let us now examine the evidences under this feature of character also.

That

That you were once afar off, and enemies to God by wicked works, is a truth you will not be disposed to question. But that you are now brought nigh, by the blood of Christ, is the point you fear to assume the confidence of believing. But only attend to those marks, and characters, by which the work of grace in the heart is known, and you will discover, that there are as plain traces to infer the *one*, as there were to be convinced of the *other*. The Lord himself indeed, gives the confirmation of it, by his servant the Prophet, and refers the gracious change, both to its source, and to its security. *When I passed by and looked upon thee, behold this time was the time of love: yea I swear unto thee, and entered into a Covenant with thee saith the Lord God and thou becamest mine.* And what that covenant was, another Prophet was commissioned to shew: that *God would not turn from his people to do them good but he would put his fear in their heart that they should not depart from him.*

These Covenant impressions therefore, which you carry about with you, do as fully prove, *the spots of God's children*, as the former transgressions of your unregeneracy, manifest that you were once *the servants of sin*. Do my Brother, examine them, one, by one, and you will find a coincidence in them to your own experience.

The

The Lord thy God (saith Moses) hath avouched thee this day to be his peculiar people: and thou hast avouched the Lord this day to be thy God.

See then, whether you do not accept of God, in this covenant way of redemption, and expect mercy, and peace in no other. Is not God's salvation your desire; his covenant pardon, your most earnest pursuit to attain: the blood, merits, and righteousness, of the Lord Jesus your security; and the sweet influence of the Holy Ghost, your daily support? Are you not continually coming, as a poor, polluted creature to be cleansed; as a hungry thirsty, creature to be filled: and as a naked creature, to be clothed, with the robe of Jesus's righteousness? Is not David's language, yours; that altho' according to your wish it doth not grow; yet this everlasting covenant is all your salvation, and all your desire? you renounce every other, and cleave wholly to this?

The very method God hath appointed for redemption is the way you desire to be found in. God's choice, your choice: and his method, yours.

These are precious evidences, my Brother, if you find them in your experience. For by these things men live and in all these things is the life of the

the Spirit. And however small and inconsiderable they may appear to *you*; yet depend upon it, there is enough in the life of the humblest believer, in the review of grace in the heart, to cry out with the astonishment of one of old *what hath God wrought!*

Learn to live upon God's faithfulness, and his Covenant promises. Consider what hath been already done for you, in the everlasting love of the Father; the Redeemer's purchase; and the blessed Spirit's quickening operations! Nay, the very evidences you possess this day, in preserving, influencing, reviving grace, is enough to make a man blush, in the consciousness of unbelief.

Yet a little while, and that blessed promise will be fulfilled. *The rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth, for the Lord hath spoken it.* Both the rebuke of sin, and sorrow: of temptation from without, and unbelief from within. God hath taken away the burthen of sin from his People, when he laid it on the Lord Jesus. And he will take away all the effects of it, when the process which it is intended to answer, shall be fully accomplished. But you will enter in the mean time, into a sweet, and gracious explanation, of a thousand trials, commissioned by infinite wisdom for your good; if you thus look, and thus

thus learn, what the unbelieving and unawakened world, know nothing of. And the very fears with which you now cloud your own evidences, of divine favor, the Lord will graciously overrule, so as to make them minister, to the accomplishment of that comprehensive promise; that *all things work together for good to them that love God; to them who are the called according to his purpose.*

May the Lord, graciously dispose every heart present, to profit by our review of this subject. And while you, and I, are receiving such unanswerable evidences, that the *Shiloh is come*; may God add, that only remaining testimony, to crown the whole; by making it personal, to every one's experience; in bringing assurance to the Mind, that we are truly gathered unto him, as his people. That when he shall come again, *to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe*; we may hail his return, in the animated language of the Prophet; and say in that day, *Lo! this is our God we have waited for him and he will save us this is the Lord we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation.*

Sermon 5.



THE SURE PROGRESS OF GRACE.

Psalm 92nd, 13th 14th Verses.

Those that be planted in the house of the Lord, shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall bring forth fruit in old age, they shall be fat and flourishing.

I KNOW not whether it hath ever struck you, with the importance the subject merits, the beautiful order, which is observed, in the great plan and œconomy of human redemption. It is difficult indeed to know which to admire most, the astonishing mercy displayed in the act itself; or, the perpetual grace and goodness, manifested in the carrying of it on, from day to day, in the heart of him, who is made the happy partaker of it.

God hath no less consulted the comfort, than he hath the interest of his People, in that the

same grace, which was displayed in forming redemption, is unremittingly exercised, to establish and confirm it. And certainly one of the highest felicities of the mind, is to watch the leadings of grace, and trace its progress, in the various operations of it continually.

It should seem, as if the gracious Author of so much mercy, thought it not enough, to make the renewed soul truly happy, in teaching him, that the eternal interests of the Lord's people, are lodged securely in the Lord's Hands; and that all the covenant-engagements of Jehovah, are with the Person of our Almighty Mediator, as Trustees of this Covenant: but God opens besides this, another source of the sweetest enjoyment, in leading him to the view of the operations of the Holy Ghost in the heart, and ripening the seeds of grace planted by his own Almighty Hand, by the daily fostering care of his own Almighty power, and carrying the whole on, by various evidences of his love through the course of time to eternity. This sums up the contents of the Holy volume, which he puts into our hands to peruse, and which when fully read and understood in the heart, gives that joy, which is very properly termed *unspeakable and full of glory*.

A train of observation like this, may be well supposed to arise in the mind, from the words
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of the text, as well as the many precious things, belonging to this golden psalm, from whence they are taken.

It is entitled a *Psalm*, or Song for the *Sabbath day*. And what more sweet, or more suited, for the service of the Lord's day; than the celebration of the Lord's praises? what more likely to awaken, every becoming frame towards God, than when recounting the faithfulness of God? we certainly take the most effectual method, to excite under the blessed Spirit's influence, a trust in a Covenant-God, for *future* blessings, when we look back, and take a review, of his *past* favors. And while grace is in exercise, how are we more likely to promote *prayer*, than by approaching a mercy-seat, with *praise*?

But without entering into an examination, of the whole beauties of this sweet psalm, the text alone will be found to contain so many in itself, that I fear we shall hardly find time, within the limits I must observe to unfold to your present view, all that it contains.

The Holy Ghost, in order to convey his divine truths to the mind, hath been pleased to make use of a great variety of metaphors, to answer this purpose. As the Great Teacher in the school

school of Jesus he is for ever sending his people, to some image, or figure, in the wide field, both of nature, and art, the better to illustrate, and explain, his doctrines of grace. And seems indeed, if one may presume to say so, to have ransacked, all the kingdoms of vegetable and animal life in order to arrest every faculty of man, that nothing might be wanting, to convey right apprehensions, of the important truths of salvation.

Among the many methods of this kind, which he hath been pleased to adopt, in borrowing illustrations, from art, or nature, to explain divine things by; the idea, of *planting* mentioned in the text is more than once made use of in the holy scriptures, and as it is a very common, and well understood process, and not more common, than beautiful, the Holy Ghost seems to have more frequently adopted it.

He compares the people of God to *trees of righteousness*, planted not in the usual place of fields, or gardens, remote from constant observation, but brought into *the house of the Lord*, where they are sure to be always in view, and to be both sheltered, and flourish in so highly favoured a soil. And contrary to nature, (for the whole work is grace) they are said to increase, with increasing years, and to be most luxuriant,

luxuriant, when from age they might otherwise be expected to decay. *They that are planted in the house of the Lord, shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall bring forth fruit in old age, they shall be fat and flourishing.*

There is a vast degree of beauty in this figure, when analyzed, and highly descriptive of what it is designed to convey, of the blessed operations of grace in the heart.

Those trees are said to be *planted*, not grow spontaneously, but planted: for *nature*, in its loveliest production, and before *grace* hath formed it a new stock, is in itself, a degenerate plant; and grows only, in the world's wide wilderness: where like *the heath in the desert, it knoweth not when good cometh*. And which, if it bear fruit, it is only the fruit of *the vine of Sodom and of the fields of Gomorrah, whose grapes are gall and their clusters bitter*. *

Moreover; those trees, are not only trees of God's own planting, taken out of nature's common, but they are brought into the sacred inclosure of God's house. That is, they are brought nigh the divine presence, and live under his continual favor. It is sweetly said, by the Lord himself, concerning his vineyard of

* Deut. 32. 32.

old, in allusion to this happy state; that he had *fenced it round, and gathered out the stones of it*; intimating, that he had so surrounded his people with his constant protection, that nothing from *without*, should hurt them, and by taking away their stoney hearts, nothing from *within*, should obstruct their fruitfulness.

And thus all true believers, like trees taken from the wild wilderness of nature, and planted in God's own house, are brought into a state of high cultivation, and may be said, from the plentiful supply of ordinances, and continual manifestations of the divine presence, to have the Summer's warmth and the Autumn shade, the clouds, and the dew, and the rain of heaven, dropping their fulness and fatness upon them.

But what is most striking, and particularly meriting our notice, in this sweet figure of the text, because it is altogether descriptive of the work of grace, and perfectly foreign to nature; is the flourishing state of those trees, in advanced age. For this is wholly supernatural. In the common operations of nature, every thing is progressive. After the season of maturity is completed, barrenness, and corruption, must follow. But in grace, the trees of God's right hand planting, are said to be most fat, and flourishing, when nature is decaying. With God's people, the sweetest fruit, is in old age.

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Their last days, are their best days. And to use another similitude, like the setting sun, in some fair evening, whose orb of glory, appears to be magnified to the view, and his beams more abundantly shining with gold, when sinking beneath the horizon: so the dying saint, sometimes shews forth greater accessions of grace, manifests stronger and sweeter evidences of the life of God in the Soul, and from long experience of God's faithfulness, affords in his latest moments, more precious testimonies of the liveliness of his faith; than in any other former period of his existence.

Think of this, my aged Fathers, in the house of God! and when health, and strength, and friends, and life, and all are decaying; beg of God, that a growing acquaintance, in the covenant love and faithfulness of the Lord, may give you increasing confidence, to bear stronger, and fuller testimony, to the truth as it is in Jesus. This will be indeed, to bring forth fruit in old age, when from the refreshments of grace, in your *own* heart, you are enabled to refresh all around you. And surely the most desirable of all deaths, must be the dying, as you have lived; hanging upon the promises, and by faith realizing heaven, even before entering upon it. Oh! what a glorious testimony is it in those latter ages, when we see a dear aged saint of the Lord manifesting like the Attraction of the magnet, that the nearer he is approaching, to the object

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of

of his desires the Lord Jesus, the stronger his soul is drawn towards him; and thus increasing longings, and increasing dependance, in *his* faithfulness, are hourly emptying the soul, of all that is its own, and filling it with all that is from above. And at length when the moment comes, he dies, as it is said that *Moses* did, upon the very mouth of the Lord, and sweetly falls asleep, in the bosom of Jesus.

The subject proposed to our Meditation, from the words of our text, will be found I hope, under the divine teachings, generally profitable. Nothing can convey instruction more, to God's own people, who are already brought by grace, into the sacred plantation of God's house, than to see the security, which they possess therefrom, and the assurance of flourishing which they are promised in advancing years.

And while this view, may serve to shew them, from whence all their fruitfulness must be derived, our subject if commissioned by the Lord, will no less be useful, to convince some uncultivated mind present, that unless they are gathered out, from the original stock, of a corrupt nature, and become planted in the house of the Lord by grace; *their root will be as rottenness and their blossom go up as the dust.* *

* Isaiah 5. 24.

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In the prosecution of this subject, I shall have only to follow up, the beautiful order, which the sacred Writer hath observed, in *first* speaking, of that state described by *planting*, in the Lord's house: and then *secondly*, the sure effect of fruitfulness, springing out of it. The text therefore forms its own arrangement.

I only stay to beg of God, at our entrance upon the subject, that *both* classes of hearers, before whom I speak, may be benefited by our review of it. That while *some* come under the transplanting hand of God, and are gathered this day from nature's wilderness, into his courts: *many more*, may find evidences, as we prosecute the path of enquiry, to manifest, that they are personally interested in the doctrine, and that precious scripture, is proved to be their portion: *They shall be called trees of righteousness the planting of the Lord that he might be glorified.* †

First then, let us attend to the important doctrine, conveyed to the Church, under this figure of *planting*.

The Scriptures, are full of the most beautiful
imagery

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† Isaiah 61. 3.

imagery, and seem to have studied a great variety in this particular, by way of illustration on this point.

An Union with the Person of the Lord Jesus, as the Great Head of his Church, being the sole means of a participation, in all the gifts, and graces, which flow from his person, to his people: it became necessary, that the truth should be clearly explained, in order to afford the more lively conviction of it. Hence it is said, that true Believers in Christ Jesus by the operation of the Eternal Spirit, are incorporated with him, as branches are in a Vine. They are united to him, as living Members in his mystical body. They are ingrafted upon him, as the graff upon a stock. They are built upon him, as upon a foundation stone: and they as lively stones, are growing up *to an holy temple in the Lord, for an habitation of God through the Spirit.* They are married to his Person, by his assumption of our nature, generally considered; and by the Spirit's work in the heart, personally applied to every individual, they are consequently entitled, to all the benefits of the union.

I make use of all these figures, (and they are all taken from scripture) in order to illustrate, the whole extent of the doctrine, which they are intended to convey. And you may observe, in the

the variety adopted, how the sacred Writers, have endeavoured to make up for the deficiency of one image, or figure, by the substitution of another. For as the idea of *planting*, doth not carry with it, that change of nature in the plant, which is wrought by grace, in the heart; under the image of *engrafting*, is included, the doctrine of conversion also. And hence, true believers in Christ, are thus represented, as not only brought out of nature's wilderness, and planted in the courts of the Lord; but in the accomplishment of this great work, their nature is regenerated, and they are formed anew, in Christ Jesus. So that being engrafted upon him, they derive all their life and moisture, and fruitfulness, from him. They enter into a full enjoyment, of all that soul-enriching communion which such a nearness, and unity may be supposed to induce. From him, (as an Apostle speaks) it is, as from the Head, *all the body by joints and bands having nourishment, ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.**

And as these wonderful effects, wrought upon the human mind, are all necessary, in order to form it, for God's plantation; so they individually carry with them, the marks, by whose sovereign power alone it is, that such supernatural deeds are wrought. Indeed, the very idea, of being planted, conveys at once a full testimony.

* Coloss. 2. 19.

mony, that the thing acted upon, must be altogether passive, in the act. For, if true believers in Jesus, like plants, grow not in their first, and natural soil, it can be no other but God, who brings them out of it, and plants them in his own house.

The Apostle *Paul*, hath illustrated this act of sovereign grace, with his usual elegance under the metaphor of a Tree, wild by nature, and grafted contrary to nature, into the true stock. *Thou* (says the Apostle speaking to the Gentile Church, whom God had brought into his garden) *wert cut out of the Olive tree, which is wild by nature, and wert grafted contrary to nature, into a good Olive Tree.* †

No image, could have been more happily chosen, to represent the state of our fallen nature, than that of an Olive Tree, let to run wild, and uncultivated, and exposed to be the prey of every beast of the wilderness. And nothing could at the same time more strikingly demonstrate, that the recovery of such a degenerate plant, must be the result of the sovereign power, and goodness of God; than by the strong figure of cutting out from this corrupt tree, and engrafting into the good tree. For the act not only exceeds the ability, but the desire, and even the consciousness

† Romans 11. 17.

consciousness of its necessity in man! It is all in opposition to nature's bent, and contrary to all nature's inclination.

To drop the figure. Every man both from original, and actual corruption, sadly indicates, that his state, is not simply ill, in this, or in that, particular, feature of the mind, but the mind itself, the very *stamina* is altogether so. It is a rottenness at the core. The heart is corruption.

Perhaps my Brother, you have never considered the subject in this point of view, and therefore, may not so readily enter into the clear apprehension of it. But if God the Holy Ghost, shall graciously condescend to be your teacher, you will then discover that there are no images, or figures, strong enough to represent the real state of the case, of man in his unrecovered, unrenewed nature, before an act of grace hath passed upon the soul.

His *understanding*, is all darkness. His *mind*, enmity against God. His *will*, uniformly rebellious. All the *affections* disorderly. In short, the *whole heart*, with every passion originating from it, *deceitful and desperately wicked*. And as these are the etchings of character, in man, so are they of every man, and of all men. They
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form indeed, the family feature. It is but to draw the picture of a human being, in his present fallen state, and these must form the outlines of his person.

And hence, the wonderful change, when accomplished by almighty grace in the heart, is expressed by corresponding characters. The *understanding*, that was once darkness, is now said, *to be light in the Lord*. The *mind* that was once enmity against God, feels a constraining love to him. The rebellious *will* is brought into captivity, to the obedience of Christ. The *affections*, which were all engaged on the side of sin and corruption, are now influenced by the spirit, to the fruits of all *goodness and righteousness and truth*. In a word, God gives a *new heart* and with it the whole man is changed. *Old things are passed away. All things are become new.*

These are the sweet effects of being gathered from the original state of nature, and being brought into a state of grace: or to use the similitude of our text, being taken from the waste, and barren wilderness, and *planted as trees of righteousness in the house of the Lord*.

And what a blessed testimony, to the truth of this doctrine is it, when the heart of any believer
finds

finds a precious correspondence to it, in his own experience. When you can look back, and see, what you once was, and as thankfully look up, and contemplate, what you now are. When the soul is conscious, of being gathered, and planted, into the Courts of God, from the perpetual supplies you receive from the Lord, as the communicating head of all influences.

Blessed be God, there are *some*, and that some I trust, not a few, who are as conscious, of drawing all their fresh springs from Jesus, as the streams, depend upon the fountain, or the rays of light, upon the Sun. They are not more sensible, that the animal life, is supported day, by day, by the sustenance derived from the bread that perisheth, than the spiritual life of their soul, by the sweet supplies of grace, which they derive, from their living head.

But if there be no union with Christ's person, there can be no communication in his gifts. Planted the soul must be in the Lord's house, and ingrafted in the true Vine Christ Jesus, or no fruit can be brought forth unto God. The text limits the blessings it promiseth, and common sense limits them also, to this precious implantation. It is they, and they only, which are planted, in the house of the Lord, that are

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said to flourish in the courts of our God. They shall bring forth fruit in old age, and shall be fat and flourishing.

Shall I beg of you, to pause one moment over this part of our discourse, before we go on to what was proposed under the second branch of it, that every one may make it a subject of diligent enquiry; whether this blessed operation hath passed upon his mind?

Are you anxious my Brother, to know your state in this matter? The point is easily ascertained. A change of soil, to the plants of nature, is not more visible, than a change of heart, when accomplished, is manifested from the work of grace. They that are planted in the house of the Lord, soon indicate, where they have taken root. They long for the manifestations of God. They are as sensible of his presence, or absence, as the tender productions of the garden, are conscious of heavenly influences.

The sweet communications which pass, and repass, between a gracious soul, and a more gracious God, do, as decidedly testify, when grace is in exercise, and when it is not, as the varied seasons of day, and night, in the natural world, manifest the change. And the sensible growth

growth which is promised in the text, though not found in equal degree in all; will yet in some certain proportion, according to the measure of grace imparted, demonstrate, those which are within, the sacred inclosure, from those which are not.

Are you sensible, my Brother, of any of these things? Do you know any evidence in your own experience, of the transplantation from death to life? Are you acquainted with those vehement desires of the soul after God, which *David* speaks of; as *the thirsting of a dry land where no water is*? Can you describe, the different states of divine communications, from the contrary, in your own instance; and do you know what it is, to enjoy the light of God's Countenance, and what to mourn after it, when at any time, suspended, as a soul that waiteth for the Lord, *more than they that watch for the morning*.

These, and the like enquiries, if closely applied, in a serious hour of examination, will soon enable any man to discover, what, above all things he is most highly interested to know, whether he be truly interested, in the promised blessing of our text, by having experienced the work of it previously exercised on his heart. Let me once more repeat, before this branch of our subject be dismissed, that an *union* with Christ's person, is

indispensible to a *communion* with his graces. And when this is accomplished, all the sweetness and fulness of that blessed Scripture follows; *Because I live ye shall live also.* *

I shall proceed now, to the *second* point which I proposed from this subject, namely, to shew the sure effects of fruitfulness, springing out of the former.

Indeed, nothing can more decidedly manifest, that believers are in a state of vital union, with their Almighty head, than when they are growing up to him in all things. For this denotes that they live under his immediate influence.

There is a beautiful order, in the Spirit's work, upon the heart, and which if truly gracious souls would keep more in view, their comforts would be greater, and their confidence more unbroken. When once the Holy Ghost hath brought the soul into this sweet union, with the Lord Jesus, there is a constant life of receiving out of his fulness. The very life indeed of the soul is in Jesus. It is no longer kept up, than it is preserved in him. The stream doth not depend more upon the fountain, neither the tree on the root, than the regenerated soul doth, upon the life-giving Head. Consequently therefore the effects of that life, in
whatever

* John 14. 19.

whatever way it be manifested, is in him. And hence all supplies, essential to preservation, must be constant, unremitting, perpetual. As the branch, never ceases to receive sap, and moisture, from the Vine, to which it is united, and by which it is kept alive; so the believer, never remits one moment, deriving resources from *Him*, who is the life of the soul, and who by way of explaining this precious affinity saith, *I am the vine ye are the branches.*

And what makes this life of dependance, so very sweet and interesting is, that God the Holy Ghost, whose gracious office it is, from first, to last, to carry it on, is continually exercising the soul, by its wants, to seek resources. It is He, which reveals to the believer his own necessities, and the Redeemer's fulness, and then brings him to Jesus, for suitable supplies. So that by thus constantly living upon him, the believer is daily increasing, in grace, in knowledge, in obedience, in love, and in affection, to the Person, and character of the Lord Jesus. Nothing can tend more, to keep the soul humble, than a daily sense of its own wants, and insufficiency. And nothing will endear the Redeemer more to the heart, than his daily, hourly, supplies to the soul, of all its necessities. And thus, when God the Spirit, hath accomplished this blessed purpose, by his divine teachings, and induced this spiritual frame of waiting on the Lord, in a constant dependance upon

upon him, the believer experimentally feels somewhat of the spirit of the Apostle, *to glory in his infirmities that the power of Christ may rest upon him.* He literally rejoiceth in his own emptiness, that it may afford occasion, to taste the sweetness of being filled from Jesus. And however paradoxical it may seem to the world; when he is most weak in himself, then is he most strong, *in the Lord, and in the power of his might.*

This is then, in the language of the text, to flourish in the courts of our God. This is to bring forth fruit in old age, when nature's root, is more and more decaying. This is *to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.* For grace is an humbling principle. And the soul that *grows in grace*, is growing downwards. That is, lays lower and lower, in the dust before God, in token of profound humiliation, in the discovery of greater insights of his own corrupt, and sinful nature. And as he advances, in the knowledge, of his Lord and Saviour, he sees more of his beauty, more of his fulness, and suitability, as a Rich Saviour, exactly formed for a poor Sinner. By growing in grace therefore, he grows more out of love with himself; and by increasing in the knowledge of his Saviour, he becomes more enamour'd of his Person and Character. And thus the blessed Spirit teaches him to know, both himself, and what Jesus is, that he may be filled *with all the fulness of God.*

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My Brother. Have you been thus taught of God? Are your advances in grace of this kind? Be assured, that there is no other to be depended upon. Men may fancy what they please, of inherent holiness in the creature: But these things result, not from divine teachings, but are the puffings up of human pride.

Do not forget this one thing. The distinguishing office of God the Holy Ghost, is to glorify *Jesus*. Now it never can tend to glorify *Jesus*, when we exalt the creature. And what can tend to exalt the creature more, than when we tempt him to fancy, that he hath in himself, somewhat of holiness to look to. When we send him to duties, and ordinances, and the exercise of his gifts, and graces, by way of recommending himself to God.

The Spirit's teachings, are all the reverse to this. He shews the sinner, that the same Almighty hand which first stripped him of every thing he fancied holy, and then led him, naked as he was, to Christ to be clothed, now leads him daily, as naked as ever, to *Jesus*, to be covered with his robe of righteousness. The same grace, which convinced him, that he was empty, and brought him to *Jesus* to be filled, teaches him like the *Israelites* in the desert, that the living bread, of which their *Manna* was a figure, must be again supplied, pure and new, every morning.

morning. And the same blessed Instructor, that made him come empty handed, and bringing nothing but his misery to recommend him, still tells him, that he hath nothing, literally nothing else to bring, but the same recommendations.

Oh! these are sweet and precious lessons, in God's School. I pray God, that you, and I, may learn them, more and more, from our great Master. Depend upon it, he that stands highest, in the upper form, of his *heavenly* teaching, is he, that hath made the greatest proficiency, in this *humbling* science. And were I in possession, of all the learning in the Universe, and the knowledge of every art and science, centered in my person: gladly would I relinquish the whole, were it possible by the sacrifice, to acquire a greater depth in those *two* grand rules of the divine life. To know my own total emptiness, and Jesus's all-sufficiency. And by the Spirit's operation to be unceasingly living upon his fulness.

But while I am speaking, of the blessedness of those, in whose experience, the promise of the text is daily fulfilling: and who from living more, and more, upon Christ, flourish as they advance in old age; I must not forget, that very probably, there may be, some mourning souls present, who from not finding this progress in their instance,

instance, are tempted to call in question, every principle of their faith, and to doubt whether they have ever been brought in, as plants in the Lord's house.

My Brother ! Do not in your anxiety, overlook those evidences, however small you may think them, which carry in their bosom, the truest marks of a work of grace in the soul. Your very fears, and anxieties, prove the reverse of what you fear. Else why those distressing apprehensions of coming short of grace ? Wherefore those longing desires after grace ? Why is it, that you sometimes rejoice, upon the smallest gleam of hope arising in the soul, and again fall back into your former despondency, when that hope is clouded ? Must there not be grace in the heart to desire, even though those desires, be not according to your wishes gratified ?

Moreover ; Say, is not the Redeemer very dear to you, as a Redeemer to his Church, and People, even though, you cannot see *your* interest clearly in him ? Is not his Person, altogether lovely, and his gifts, and graces, most desireable, however short you yourself come in evidences, that you are united to the one, or have communion with the other ? And faint,
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and indistinct, as the impressions of hope are upon your mind, of a personal interest in Jesus, and his offices; tell me, would you, or could you, give them up, with an indifference, as one that hath no right in them? Do my Brother, examine yourself, by these standards of character, and I venture to believe, that you will find precious testimonies, where you least expected them.

Besides: It should be remembered also, that Believers in the Church of Christ, like plants, do not, neither are they expected to flourish, with equal strength, and fruitfulness. The distribution of spiritual gifts, we are taught, are diverse, though all coming from one, and the self same Spirit, *who divideth to every man severally as he will.* The church at *Thessalonica* flourished so abundantly, as to call forth a particular thanksgiving, to God, from the Apostle *Paul* upon the occasion. *We are bound* (says he) *to thank God always for you brethren as it is meet because your faith groweth exceedingly.* On the contrary, the Church among the *Hebrews*, made so little progress, that the same Apostle told them, they had need to learn, *the first principles.* But as Churches both, we may be very certain, there was a progressive improvement, though not in an equal degree.

I will be very ready to confess with you, that nothing can be equally desirable, to the soul, as the increasing with all *the increase of God*. But while grace prompts the soul, to desire this more and more, the same grace, doth as earnestly teach the believer, to be thankful for what he hath.

Satisfied by the evidences given, that you are truly brought, into the courts of the Lord's house, and united to Christ Jesus, as a branch in the vine; bless God, for such distinguishing mercy. And while in humble waitings, in the appointed way of ordinances, you are seeking an increase, from the Lord, do not overlook, nor *despise*, (for we know the Lord doth not) *the day of small things*.

Recollect also, that it is in grace, as in nature. Though the branches of the tree, are not all equally lofty, or equally luxuriant; yet the humblest, and the lowest bough, if really a part of it, is as much nourished, and sustained, from the root, as the strongest, and the highest. And is not that a sweet reflection to the soul, that Jesus's care is peculiarly exercised, over the low, and the weak, and such as from their situation are more immediately exposed to danger? To

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use another beautiful image of scripture; while he feeds his flock like a Shepherd *in the day that he is among his sheep, to seek that which was lost, and to bind up that which was broken, and to strengthen that which was sick: he is said, to gather the lambs with his arm and carry them in his bosom and gently lead those that are with young.*

I have been so very diffuse, in the illustration of the doctrine of the text, in the opening of my discourse, and have so generally incorporated the practical inferences arising out of it, as we have gone along, that there will be the less reason for detaining you, with any length of application in conclusion.

I dare not indeed, consistent with the duty of my office, of supplying some portion for every one in the congregation, I dare not shut up the subject altogether, without dropping a word to such of my audience, as at present feel themselves uninterested in the blessed promises of the text, because they are uninfluenced in the doctrine of it.

Very obvious it must be, without my remarking it, that if the great mercies of a state of flourishing,

flourishing, and fruitfulness, spoken of, as belonging to God's house, are wholly depending upon the event of being planted there; unless this act takes place, neither can be found. It were a folly to look for the effect, without the cause. *And the alternative is awful indeed. That solemn declaration of the Lord Jesus upon the point, is a volume; *Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up.* *

Shall I beg of you therefore my Brother, from a conscious sense of the vast importance of the thing itself, to look diligently *lest you fail of the grace of God*. Never forget, that the most plentiful ordinances, void of this life-giving power, are all nothing. The rain, and the dew, and the clouds' fatness, drop in vain, on rocks and sands.

Gracious God! accomplish thy great work of conversion, (if it be thy blessed will) in the hearts of some who hear me this day. And now before *the axe is laid at the root of the tree*; before that awful sentence is gone forth, *cut it down why cumbereth it the ground*: let that precious promise to *Israel* of old, be their portion; *Bring them out, and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance, in the place O Lord,*

* Matth. 15. 13.

*Lord, which thou hast made for thee, to dwell in, in the sanctuary. O Lord which thy hands have established.† Then will they be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that thou mayest be glorified.**

Suffer me to add, for the encouragement of the faithful, that I trust in God, no faint, or thirsty soul, will depart, without knowing his personal interest, in the sweet promises of the text, and having as feelingly received their accomplishment, in his own experience.

Your very wants carry with them this life of dependence; and on whom shall the faint rest, but upon the strong, or where shall they thirsty be filled, but at the fountain head? Every exercise of grace leads the soul to Jesus, and the more necessitous your circumstances are the stronger should be the motives to live upon his fulness. Go then my Brother, go unto Jesus. And take with you this one observation, as a never-failing truth, answerable to all exigencies: Whatever brings you closer to him, must be a blessing, however disguised it may be in a covering of sorrow.

There is more space in the heart, to be filled from the Infinite Creator, when the creature is most

† Exod. 15. 17.

* Isaiah 61. 3.

most emptied. And the preciousness of Jesus, will be best known, when the soul hath literally nothing else left, that is precious. A Believer may, and I hope doth, sometimes feel the grace which is in Christ Jesus, when his blessings are multiplied, upon him. But depend upon it, the sweetest season for the soul, to say as the Prophet did, *Yet will I rejoice in the Lord I will joy in the God of my salvation*, is when the fig tree doth not blossom, and the fields yield no meat. †

May that sweet promise be fulfilled, as it may be required; *I have satiated the weary soul, and I have replenished every sorrowful soul.* *

† Hab, 3. 18.

* Jerem. 31. 25.



most eminent. And the preciousness of Jesus
will be best known when the soul hath met
nothing else but that is precious. O how
may, and I hope shall, some meet the Jesus
which is in Christ Jesus. And his blessing
multiplied upon him. But dearest upon the
sweetest reason for the soul, to say as the Pro-
phet said, I will I remain in the land I will stay
in the land of my salvation. When the soul
tried hath not changed, and the soul hath
met.

May that sweet company be multiplied and
be received. I have seen the
soul and I have experienced every blessing
of God.

Sermon 6.



THE BLESSED EFFECTS OF THE LOVE OF GOD
IN THE SOUL.

Romans, 5th. Chap. 5th. Verse.

And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.

NOTHING can be more evident, from the general scope, and tendency, of those exceeding great and precious promises, which are given to believers in the gospel of Christ; than that it is the intention of our heavenly Father, his people, should enjoy, every possible consolation, in their passage thro' this world, to a better. It should seem indeed, as if a gracious God, not satisfied, with giving the positive assurance, that *there is a rest which remaineth for the*

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the people of God; determined to afford them, many refreshing springs of comfort by the way, which might beguile the tediousness of the path, and sometimes make the desert through which they are passing, *to blossom as the rose*.

Laying this for a foundation, that the great work of the conversion of the heart to God, hath been wrought by the Holy Ghost on the believer, (and this you know, is the pre-requisite of all happiness,) and then, all the sweet properties, resulting from such an act of grace, must eventually follow. And depend upon it, in proportion, as the love of God, is shed abroad in the heart, by his divine power; so exactly corresponding to this, will be the influence, suited to every occasion. And for this plain reason. As the love of God *flows in*, creature dependencies, and the comforts, or conflicts, arising from all creature dependencies, *go out*. When this grand principle, of divine love, is *shed abroad* in the heart; that is, is diffused in every part of it; enters in to every recess; and fills up the whole space; there will be little, or no room, for other tenants, to occupy. And while the soul, thus derives all its resources, from this one principle alone, which is a fixed, and settled principle, and liable to no fluctuation, there will be *a hope that maketh not ashamed*, as *Paul* calls it, in the worst of times; and

and let what will vary *without*, a peace is secured *within*, which *keeps the heart, and mind thro' Christ Jesus.*

But let the Apostle speak his own words. He tells us, in the opening of this Chapter, some of the many precious Effects, which flow from a state of justification before God. He considers, (as I have done, in what I have already said) the soul, to be taken out, of that state of enmity with God, in which every man is born; and brought into reconciliation and favor with God, through the merits, and death of the Lord Jesus. And then, enumerates various blessed consequences, which immediately arise out of it. *Therefore (says he) being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ. By whom also, we have access by faith, into this grace, wherein we stand; and rejoice in hope, of the glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also, knowing that tribulation worketh, patience, and patience, experience: and experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God, is shed abroad in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us.*

How very beautiful, and unanswerably conclusive, is this reasoning, of the Apostle. He

takes up the subject, from the beginning, and having presupposed, that original quarrel, which sin hath made, between God, and his people, to have been made up, and peace restored; he therefrom proves, that not only the distance, and enmity between the parties, are removed, but the greatest favor, and affection, follows: and thus rises, by a sweet climax, step by step, until he beholds the sinner, leaping into the very bosom of God, with an holy familiarity and affection, unbounded, and without shame.

And what I would principally desire you to observe, in this passage of scripture, which introduceth the words of my text, is the delightful view it affords, of the gracious concern, which each person of the Godhead, in their several operations, are intimated as taking, for the accomplishment of this happy purpose. It is with *God*, that we are said to have peace. And this is wrought, through the sole merits, of that Almighty Peace-Maker, our *Lord Jesus Christ*. But, that the part, which *God the Holy Ghost* bears, in this great work, may not be overlooked, or forgotten; the access of this grace, wherein we are said to stand, manifests his gracious leadings, by whom it is accomplished. For while we have this access, the same Apostle elsewhere tells us, that it is *by one Spirit unto the Father*. *

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* Ephes. 2. 18.

And the charming consequences, which arise out of those gracious acts of the Godhead, on the minds of the Lord's people, are no less deserving your notice, and regard. They, which are thus admitted into reconciliation, and favor, are admitted at the same time, into the privileges of it. The faith of justification, in which they stand, qualifies them no less, to *rejoice in hope of the glory of God*. He that gives grace, will also give glory. The whole indeed, is the sole result of divine favor. And therefore, the gift of grace now, is the sure pledge of glory hereafter.

And lest any one should be led to suspect, from the well-known trials, which the godly in Christ Jesus, are sure to encounter in life, that these points, become questionable: the Apostle goes on, to point out, an accession of happiness, even from what the world would think evil. *Not only so* (says he) *but we glory in tribulations also*. As if he had said, by this precious property of grace, which like a chemical process possesseth the happy art of converting bitter qualities into sweet; we glory in tribulations also. Not that God's people are insensible to afflictions, more than others. And certain it is that all afflictions, are for the present, *not joyous but grievous*. But, by their operations, they ultimately prove blessings in disguise. Like medicated waters, which in themselves, are
nauseous

nauseous to the taste, yet by their passing over some mineral property, imbibe a virtue, which proves salutary in their application; so afflictions however painful in their operation, become sanctified to the soul, from the grace accompanying them.

Hence *tribulation worketh patience*, among the people of God, which in the world at large, produceth the reverse. And *patience* long exercised, begetteth *experience*; because the longer it is used, the greater evidences it brings with it, of God's faithfulness to his promises. And as repeated proofs of God's faithfulness, in a Covenant-way, giveth strength to his promises, the more we try God, the more our hope in him must be enlarged. And thus in a truly justified soul, there will be an *hope that maketh not ashamed*, because it leaveth nothing to a peradventure, to be ashamed of.

The Believer goeth not to a mercy seat, and a throne of grace, with a presumption, his God *may* hear, or *may* answer, for he knoweth that he *will* answer. There is one there, whom the Father heareth alway, and through whom, he is accepted, and justified. Such an hope maketh not ashamed therefore, because, *the love of God is shed abroad in the heart, by the Holy Ghost given unto us*.

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What I propose, from this sweet portion of scripture, as God the Spirit shall be pleased to enable, is, to demonstrate, the invaluable properties of the mercy itself, in *the love of God shed abroad in the heart*: and the blessed effects resulting from it, in the *hope which maketh not ashamed*.

It is possible, a gracious God, may commission, a subject of this nature, to the refreshment of some souls of his people present; and lead them to see, that a communion with their Covenant-God in Christ Jesus, by the Spirit's shedding abroad this love in the heart, is not a privilege, to be called into exercise only now, and then; but becomes one, uniform, steady, and unceasing principle of action, by which, like saints of old, they walk with God, through all their pilgrimage.

And I will no less hope also, that a gracious God, while peculiarly refreshing the awakened soul, by a meditation of this kind, may make it useful to those, who are as yet unconscious of his love. We certainly take the most effectual method under his grace, to excite the careless to a greater concern for his salvation, when we bring before him, a view of the privileges of the faithful.

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In the pleasing prospect, of ministering to this important purpose, I shall invert the order of the text, and *first*, endeavour to shew you, in what way, this love of God shed abroad in the heart manifests itself to the believer's experience so as to lead the soul into this constant frame of enjoyment. And then *secondly* describe the blessed effect, arising out of such a cause, in that *hope which* (the Apostle saith) *maketh not ashamed*. And my prayers are, that He, to whose gracious operations in the soul, we owe such unspeakable mercies, may at this time, give you convincing evidence, of the whole in your own experience, by *directing your hearts into this love of God and into the patient waiting for Christ*.

First, I am to shew, in what way, this love of God, manifests itself to the believer's experience, so as to lead the soul, into this constant frame of enjoyment.

And this may be exemplified by a train of evidences, taken from the very frame of mind, of a truly regenerated soul, in his daily acts of faith, more, or less, which he is enabled to exercise, according to the measure of grace imparted, on each of the persons of the Godhead. For there certainly is, and must be, these distinct
acts,

acts of communion, both with the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; agreeably to the respective offices, which they are described in scripture, as having taken, in the redemption of the Lord's people.

Perhaps, I cannot adopt a more effectual method, of explaining this very sweet, and interesting doctrine, than by an illustration of it, under each of these particulars. May the Lord the Spirit, graciously grant you, experimental testimonies of the truth itself, by his divine teachings as we go along.

And first, in respect to the personal interest, which God the Father hath taken, in the salvation of his people, and which the love of God, shed abroad in the heart, by the Holy Ghost, enables the believer to discover.

Tracing up from slender beginnings, effects to their causes, in the covenant love of God the Father, the believer in Jesus, is able to discern, the grand source of all his happiness. And as he is led to see, that this gracious act, did not originate in the merit of man, so he as plainly discovers, that the continuance of it, can need no better security, than the unchangeable purpose of God in Christ.

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Hence therefore, he contemplates the Father's covenant, as a fixed, and *settled* plan, of mercy. And such a mercy, as is not intended to operate, at some particular times, or seasons only, according to the state, and temperature, of the human mind; but is in itself, one uniform principle of action.

And therefore, in proportion, as the love of God, occupies the heart, or to use the more expressive language of the Apostle, is shed abroad in the heart; as pure milk dropped upon water, soon diffuses itself over the surface, and gives a tinge to the whole; so from the diffusion of this principle, the believer will be enabled to find comfort, in the view of the covenant engagements of God, in the worst of times, whatever his own frame or feelings may be.

To exemplify this by a particular illustration. Let it be supposed for argument's sake, that a true believer in Christ, who stands in the justified state, the Apostle describes, in this Chapter, through the merits of the Lord Jesus, hath felt, the influence of this love of God shed abroad in his heart, by the Holy Ghost. Let it be further supposed, that such an one, is brought under the influence of some pressing temptation. Perhaps, added to the conflicts arising from the powers of darkness, he hath
other

other trials to contend with. There *may be*, much distress of soul; and there certainly *will be* much remains, of indwelling corruption to afflict him. In such seasons, (and they are not unfrequent, in the life of real believers) as all creature resources are cut off, where shall the soul find relief?

God the Holy Ghost, who only can illumine the darkness of the mind may have remitted his shining. He hath not withdrawn from the soul his presence, for that according to gospel promises is impossible. Jesus declared concerning him that *he should abide for ever*. But, though the glorious Inhabitant be at home, he doth not appear. And, unless he gives grace, to act faith, upon the person, of the Lord Jesus; certain it is, that no communications can flow. For it is his peculiar office, to *take of Christ and shew unto his people*. From whence then, shall the believer look for comfort?

Here then comes in to our aid, the sweetness, and importance, of God the Father's *covenant love*; in which that blessed promise, hath its full accomplishment: *I will never leave thee nor forsake thee*. In contemplating this provision, of God's covenant-engagements, the soul finds at all times relief; for it is an *everlasting Covenant, ordered in all things and sure*. It no longer then

becomes the question, with the soul, under any trial, of sin, or temptation, whether God *may* help; but he is enabled to assume the well grounded confidence, that God *will* help. There are no *peradventures* here. All is fixed, and certain and absolute. The view of God, as a Covenant-God, in Christ, removes all fear. And like the Prophet of old, when comforts run low, and temptations are high, when *the best of men are like briars, and the most upright, sharper than a thorn hedge*: nay, when the greatest bosom friend, proves deceitful: the soul looks at God, in his covenant relation, and says, *my* God will hear *me*. Oh! it is very sweet, and an unspeakable mercy, to have a Covenant-God to look *to* and a Covenant-God, to rely *upon*, in all seasons, and upon all occasions.

And next to the blessedness of the Covenant itself, the method, which God the Father hath graciously condescended to adopt, by way of recommending it to our warmest embraces, becomes a very pleasing addition to its enjoyment.

A bare promise from God, when it is considered who, and what God is, in the unchangeableness of his nature, and perfections, ought to have satisfied every mind, that what he promised, he would most certainly perform.

God

God therefore when he entered into Covenant engagements, pledged himself to faithfulness, by the most solemn promises. And we know, his ability is competent, to the performance of all that he hath promised.

But the condescension of God rested not here. *God willing* (saith an Apostle) *more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise, the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an Oath: that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us.* *

Still moreover, advancing in wonderful grace and condescension, God confirmed his covenant-engagements, in a way which surpasseth all calculation of mercy, and in the blood of his dear Son, stamped its validity, with an impression of tenderness unequalled.

And as a perpetual seal to this covenant, marked in blood, and in no less blood than the blood of Christ, in that standing memorial of Jesus's death, which we call the *ordinance of the holy supper*, he hath designed to keep up, a never ceasing remembrance of it, among the faithful, at every renewed commemoration.

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* Heb. 6. 17. 18.

The Lord Jesus himself gave it this importance, when he called it, *the cup of the new testament* (or covenant) *in his blood*.

Now put all these together, and see, what a gracious design, God the Father had, that his people should be refreshed, upon all occasions, with a view of his covenant mercies. Not content, with expressing in the covenant itself, every evidence of mercy, (for it is in fact, nothing but grace, and mercy, from beginning to end,) our compassionate Father, well knowing, the weakness, and unbelief, of the human heart, adopted all these methods to gain our affections, to the reception of it; that when the other waters of the sanctuary ran low, the soul might find sufficient to assuage his thirst in this. *And* (as the Apostle says) *though it be but a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth or addeth thereto.* * Hence therefore, God's covenant established on such immutable pillars, must be like himself, *the same yesterday to day and for ever*. And the believer finds it so in the darkest hours who stands justified in Christ's righteousness, and in whose heart, the love of God, hath been shed abroad, by the Holy Ghost given unto him.

Let us next view the same blessed property of the Spirit's influence, in this particular, as it is called

* Gal. 3. 15.

called forth, in exercise, towards the Person, and offices, of the Lord Jesus Christ. And this, if I mistake not, will as effectually tend, to exemplify the preciousness of the principle, as the former.

From the well known union, which the real believer hath, with the Person, of the Lord Jesus; he possesseth an interest of property, in whatever belongs to the Redeemer. As the Covenant-head, and Mediator, of his people, he is a member of his mystical body; and therefore, part of himself. So that not only *all his springs are in him*, but consequently, his graces can never totally languish, while issuing from their Almighty fountain head. *Because I live*, (says Christ) *ye shall live also*. It is impossible, that the smallest, or most inconsiderable of Christ's people, should perish, without by so much involving the Redeemer in the same. For *we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones*.

But as in the present and unripe state of existence, every thing is imperfect, there will be no less an imperfection, in the operation of these blessed properties.

Though

Though truly, and properly, united to the Lord Jesus, by virtue of the renewed life in the soul, the communication from his fulness, will be more, or less manifested, according as this principle of divine love, from the Spirit's work, is shed abroad in the heart. Where there is the greatest emptiness of all creature enjoyments, there in proportion, will be larger space afforded, for the filling in of the Creator's love. And on the contrary, when the heart is swarming, with vain thoughts, like a cage of unclean birds, until these fly away, or more properly speaking are put to flight, what room can be found for the love of God?

It becomes very sweet to observe, and indeed it is among the principle operations, by which the Holy Ghost, sheds abroad the love of God in the heart, the method he is pleased to adopt, for the accomplishment of so much mercy. In order to empty the soul, for the reception of divine things, he permits his people, not unfrequently, the gratification of their wayward desires, in the pursuit of one creature comfort, after another, on purpose, that from continual disappointment, they may be brought back, to seek happiness, where alone it can be found. For this end, he tinges all their comforts, with vanity; converts their very pleasures, into sources of pain; causes a bitter fruit, to grow out of the very plant, they had proposed to themselves,

selves, much sweetness in: and by throwing down, one after another, all their false props of creature confidences, he brings them low in the dust before God, by way of preparing them, for the greater manifestations of his love.

We have a beautiful instance of this, exemplified in the case, of the Church of old. *She said* (saith the Prophet) *I will go after my lovers, that gave me my bread, and my water, my wool, and my flax, mine oil, and my drink.* Strong expressions these to describe, the many wanderings of the heart, after its various idols. But what saith God to all this? *I will hedge up thy way* (saith the Lord) *with thorns, and make a wall, that she shall not find her paths. And she shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them: and she shall seek them, but she shall not find them. Then shall she say I will go and return to my first husband for then was it better with me than now.**

Here you see at once, an illustration, of that process of grace, by which the Holy Ghost, brings back the soul, and prepares it, for the full enjoyment of divine love. When he hath mercifully induced sorrow, and disappointment,
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* Hosea 2. 5. 6. 7.

and vexation; and sickened the heart, in the pursuit of all creature comforts: having thus driven *all buyers and sellers out of the temple*, a fit habitation is then formed, for Jesus himself to enter in. The heart melts under a deep sense, of its own folly, and ingratitude, towards God, and God's goodness towards him. And full of these impressions, the believer is driven to his knees, in prayer, to confess his vileness and God's mercy. His language then is; *I have seen an end of all perfection. Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth, that I desire beside thee. My flesh and my heart faileth, but God, is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever.*

These are precious testimonies, of the Spirit's influence, in confirmation of the doctrine of the text. The love of God, is indeed, shed abroad by his power, when all creature affections, are lessened, or removed, to make space, for the full reception of the Redeemer. And in proportion, as this blessed principle prevails, so all others die away.

You may therefore estimate, your own exact situation of character, in this particular, by this unerring standard. And depend upon it, according to the degree of estimation, in which the Lord Jesus is held by you, such more or less,

less, is the Spirit's operation of this blessed gift in the heart: for your affection can proceed, from no other source. In those happy souls, where this influence is largely extended, there will be no apprehension, no distrust, no deadness to divine things, no anxious solicitude for earthly pursuits, no spirit of bondage, no guilty frames; *for perfect love casteth out fear.* The Holy Ghost, sheds abroad the love of God, with such fulness, and sovereignty, that it sweeps away as an over powering torrent, all other considerations.

And hence it is, that true believers in Christ, in whose hearts this love of God prevails, as in their experience creature comforts have lost their sweetness, so afflictions loose their bitterness. While this love is uppermost, they can, and do enjoy Christ, in every thing, and without any thing. For in all circumstances, which concern them they see somewhat of Jesus. Are they blessed with children, friends, health; eying the hand of Jesus in the gifts, gives a relish to the whole. Are they deprived of them and stand defenceless, and alone: having the Lord for their portion, in him they have all. Reproaches unjustly thrown upon them, by the world, will hardly be felt, while the peace of God rules within. And the strife of tongues,

will be as the clamor of a distant multitude to the soul, which is wholly occupied with the love of God. Sweet and precious was his experience, to those truths, who in the full confidence of them cried out, *who shall separate us from the love of Christ?* And it will be a happy testimony to the same in *your* instance, if from the same cause, you can say as he did: *I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.* †

I have but one evidence more to bring, by way of illustrating this doctrine, of the Spirit's work in the heart; and that is, when he reveals himself to the soul, in his gracious operations, so as to open another source of enjoyment to the believer, in a consciousness from whom all these mercies flow.

It might be well supposed indeed, without my insisting much upon it, that if God the Holy Ghost be, (as scripture teacheth he is) the sole Author, of all that delightful fellowship, and communion, which true believers have, with the
Father,

† Romans 8. 35. 38. 39.

Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ; the same grace would be exercised, to lead the mind into a proper apprehension of his Person, and operations also, who is the cause of these enjoyments.

This view of the subject becomes very interesting. The multiform methods, by which God the Holy Ghost carries on his grace in the soul, in quickening, reviving, comforting, and strengthening influences; are all, so many illustrations, of the doctrine. And, though our inattentive, and careless minds, lose a thousand proofs which he is continually affording, to this amount; yet, there are sufficient evidences, in every believer's experience, to the fact itself, which demonstrate, that while he is shedding abroad the love of God, in the heart, to open communion, between each of the persons of the Godhead, and the soul; he is no less calling up every devout affection, of the heart, towards himself.

Every grace indeed, which is brought forth into exercise, for faith to act upon, the Person of the Father, or of the Son, as well as all the sweet influences, which manifest themselves in the life, are the immediate result, of his divine power, and therefore called in scripture, *the fruit*

fruit of the Spirit. * And it would form a pleasure of the purest kind upon every renewed instance of the sort, if the believer were to accustom himself, to watch, and mark his footsteps, in the ten thousand proofs, which he is daily testifying of his attention to him, in those particulars.

Shall I beg of you my Brother, either of you, who have personally known the love of God, shed abroad in your heart by the Holy Ghost, to mark the evidences of the spirit's work, in the way I am now insisting upon, in your own experience.

When for example, at any time, you have been deeply exercised with soul distresses, arising from any misconstruction, or perversion, of the sacred word, and *in danger of being led away with the error of the wicked*; have you never found the Holy Ghost, personally revealing himself to your apprehension, under that well known character, and office, as *the Spirit of truth to guide you into all truth*? And hath not his sweet instruction flowed into the mind, in such a manner, as if that voice from behind, was heard by you; saying, *this is the way walk ye*

* Gal. 5. 22.

*ye in it when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left? **

Is there one present, who is at all conscious, what preventing, and restraining grace means; and who in the hour of temptation, hath felt its merciful influence, in keeping back, the foot from evil, but what finds the blessing doubly sweet, when the same hand that restrains, displays itself in the act of mercy, and fully proves, that it is *through the Spirit he is enabled to mortify the deeds of the body?*

And is not that *joy and peace* of the soul, which the believer finds *in believing*, either when resting upon the covenant-love of the Father, or in receiving a renewed application, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus to the soul, rendered yet more completely rapturous, when the whole is discovered, to be brought home, and poured into the heart, by the power of the Holy Ghost.

Oh Sir! depend upon it the sweetness of all spiritual gifts, become more, or less, so according, as the blessed Spirit himself, who is the Fountain,

* Isaiah 30, 21.

Fountain of them, is beheld in view, while the soul is enjoying itself at the stream.

And what are all the sweet intercourses, between God and his people, which pass at a mercy seat, but the immediate effect of his love, shed abroad in the heart, who comes as a *Spirit of grace and supplication*, to help the *infirmities of the saints, according to the will of God*, and who maketh *intercession for them*, in the *groanings* which their full hearts cannot utter?

My poor unawakened Brother! how totally destitute, of all gracious influences must you be, if ignorant of this peculiar office, of God the Holy Ghost, upon the soul? Alas! without him we can neither form right conceptions, of the great Object of prayer; we can neither know, what prayer is, or how to perform it acceptably; we can neither be sensible of our wants, or know through what channel, those wants are to be supplied. He, and he alone, who sheds abroad the love of God in the believer's heart, opens the heart at the same time, to express suitable acknowledgments of that love. And as He knoweth what the mind of God is, so is it his peculiar office, to reveal to us, this knowledge also, that our application for spiritual mercies, may be according to the will of God.

But

But I shall have said enough I hope, in accomplishing the *first* object I proposed from this subject, in the illustration of the doctrine. I proceed therefore now to the *second* point intended to describe, the blessed effects arising out of such a cause, in that *hope which maketh not ashamed.*

Were I to enumerate by a particular detail, the whole of those eventual happy consequences, which arise out of this love of God, in the heart, a volume would not be competent to the subject. But I am limited by the text, to one only, and that indeed is so comprehensive, that it folds within it, a multitude of others; *Hope maketh not ashamed.* That is, the confidence the believer finds, in the love of God, when grace is in exercise, through the justifying righteousness, of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Spirit's seal, to this truth in the heart, cannot deceive, or make ashamed, to induce fear, for it is liable to no disappointment. And this perfect conviction, of God's unalterable covenant-love to the soul, draws out the soul, in love to God, and carries the believer, through every situation, and state, with which the mind can be exercised, in passing through the present life.

Pause my Brother, over this one view, of the sweet effects, of the love of God shed
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abroad

abroad in the heart, and contemplate the vast and extensive privileges belonging to it. To have access to a gracious God, at all times, and upon all occasions, as one in a justified state, before him, through the blood, and righteousness of Jesus: to live upon the fulness, and all-sufficiency of the Redeemer: to feel the Spirit's influence in the heart, under all his quickening, and refreshing consolations; what term will you give this, better than what the Apostle hath given, *a hope that maketh not ashamed?*

Oh! that I could enter, into the very heart of a true believer, and by unfolding to your view, the various workings of divine grace, where this principle of the love of God is shed abroad, point out those sweet exercises, which arise out of this soul-enriching communion.

The real believer, from the personal relation, in which he considers himself, as standing to God, looks up to him as to a Father, and beholds every act, and every manifestation, of God towards him, as coming to him in a fatherly dispensation. And hence, all those reciprocal communications, from God, to the soul, and the soul, to God, carry with them, evidences of this sweet, and endearing tie of affinity.

And

And in what a very high degree of tenderness, God intended this affectionate appellation, of Father to be used, in reference to himself, is beautifully set forth, in a passage of the prophecy of *Jeremiah*. Israel had revolted from the Lord, and was gone away backward. And God, with his usual grace, and mercy, is represented, as inviting Israel to return. But when a difficulty, seemed to have arisen in the divine mind, (speaking after the manner of men) how God, should take again into his bosom, such rebellious creatures; *How shall I put thee* (saith God) *among the Children?* The Lord himself suggests this, as the only method. *Thou shalt call me* (saith God) *my Father!* As if, in the very name of *Father*, in a Covenant way, through Christ every thing of tenderness was included. *

And let the heart of any Father say, what kind of tenderness that is? Is there a single request, which can possibly be denied, where there is ability to answer it, when the application is made, in those endearing terms, "behold I come to thee as to my Father; thou wilt not surely cast off thy Child?"

Let it be remembered also, in this representation, that all the heighthenings of affection, in
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* *Jeremiah* 3. 13.

an earthly Parent, must fall infinitely short, of what are the bowels of love, in our Almighty Parent. In this perfection, as indeed in every other, it may be said, *as the heavens are higher than the earth so are God's ways higher than our ways and his thoughts than our thoughts.*

And why is it then, that the souls of justified believers, feel no more of those sweet endearments, towards God? The reason is obvious. There is a deficiency in the principle itself. We regard God, more as our Judge, than we do as our Father. We entertain hard thoughts of him, from the misinterpretation of his providences, and the like. And hence, our confidence, and dependance upon him, is lessened. *Thou thinkest (saith God) that I was altogether such an one as thyself.*

And might I venture to send some of you home, to your experiences, I would not scruple to aver; that this will be found among the causes, why many, and otherwise gracious souls too, go so lean from day to day. You mingle up duties, and ordinances, with the love of God, as a partly recommending motive, to obtain his kindness. You estimate the degree of favor you stand in, with God, by this standard. And hence, in proportion, as those duties are observed,

ved, or those ordinances followed; such will be the frame of your mind. Sometimes darkness, at others light, and thus perpetually changing like the moon. And I fear, if the truth were known, that this is for the greater part, the experience of most believers.

But only suppose now, that God the Holy Ghost, were to shed abroad this love of God, in the heart, with a fulness, and sovereignty, so as to fill every corner of it; in this case, the whole soul being occupied with divine love, affords no room, either for carnal fears, or carnal confidences, to creep in. Every other consideration is absorbed in this one. He, whom my soul loveth, the believer will say, is my Father, my Redeemer, my Sanctifier. And do I not remember, that precious word of his, *Ask me of things to come, concerning my Sons, and concerning the work of my hands, command ye me.* * And shall I not be confident in my approaches towards him, and perfectly convinced, that all I require, will be granted, when coming in such a relation, and encouraged by such a promise?

My Brother! if God the Holy Ghost hath happily shed abroad this love in your heart, you need no comment from me to say, to what extent it may be carried. Depend upon it, there
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* Isaiah 45. 11.

are *some*, who from the Spirit's influence, and the freedom induced in the soul, by the Saviour's justifying righteousness, can go to a mercy seat at all times, with an holy boldness, to ask any thing, and like *Jacob*, wrestle with God in prayer, with unceasing importunity, till it be obtained. It is a Child's privilege this. And the sweet and near affinity of the Father, and that a Covenant Father too, in Christ, at once justifies and confirms it.

But perhaps it may be questioned, What if the believer fall into transgression, will not the soul feel restraints, in the exercise of those privileges? Yes! unquestionably. A sense of guilt upon the mind, will ever form a sad cloud of darkness, to intercept our view of the divine countenance.

Believers well know, what it is to groan under a body of sin, and death, which they carry about with them, and for the burden of which, they go heavily. And indeed the true believer, in whose heart the love of God hath been most fully manifested, will be most abundant in his sorrow. Like *David*, he feels the chain of sin, to be most galling, because his iniquities are peculiarly aggravated. *Against thee, thee only have I sinned and done this evil in thy sight.* Such will be

be his language: That I who owe so much to God, who are in covenant engagements with him, his sworn servant, his adopted son, his child, that I, of all men, should have broken his commandments, and sinned against him! Hence from the very bottom of his soul, he sends forth that mournful complaint, like *Ezra*, *O my God I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee my God!* *

But do observe in all this, how very distinguished, and expressive, those soul-rending cries are, of the state of the heart before God. The love of God, is still at the bottom, notwithstanding all appearances. And there is a child-like spirit, a true filial affection, yet remaining. God was *Ezra's* God, though *Ezra* dared not look up, with his usual confidence.

Oh! it, forms, a blessed frame, and plainly manifests grace in the heart, and in full exercise, when the believer lays low in the dust before God, in a conscious sense of sin, and unworthiness. Shame, and confusion of face, are sweet testimonies, of what passeth within.

Similar to this state of mind but yet in a less degree, are what hath been considered, as interruptions to the love of God; I mean that darkness

* *Ezra* 9. 6.

darkness of soul, when distressing sighs go up, and a dead silence at the mercy seat prevails, so that no answers come down, to assuage grief, *I said* (saith the Prophet, upon one of those mournful occasions) *I am cast out of the sight of thine eyes yet will I look again toward thy holy Temple.* § But is it not abundantly evident, though the Prophet himself saw nothing but terror, and thought that he was now totally abandoned, yet divine strength, was in the very moment upholding him, with his everlasting arms, or how could he have looked towards God's holy Temple?

So far are such cases, from becoming proofs that God hath suspended the operation, of shedding his love abroad in the heart, or shut up his loving kindness in displeasure, that they afford some of the truest evidences of his mercy. Those views, which are opened thereby, to the Believer's experience, of his own nothingness, before a throne of grace, the emptying him of all righteousness, in order to endear the Redeemer, and his righteousness to the heart; the hanging on the mercy seat, and the resolute wrestlings with God, which it occasions: these are among the sweetest fruits, of the Spirit's work, and proclaim, that the love of God, lies deep in the heart, and is largely shed abroad there, by his divine power. Had the poor woman of *Canaan*, been spared
this

this exercise, she would not have received that glorious testimony, which the Lord Jesus gave her, of the excellence of her faith; neither would her monument, have formed so conspicuous a figure, in the Christian road as it now doth, for the instruction and comfort, of exercised believers, travelling by.

Some of the strongest testimonies of divine love, are among those, where the soul is called out, to great difficulties, and discouragements, on purpose to manifest divine strength in creature weakness. And do my Brother mark this down, among the useful observations, for your experience; whenever the Lord Jesus is pleased to try *your faith*, depend upon it the issue will manifest to you *his faithfulness*. God the Holy Ghost hath caused it to be left on record, with peculiar emphasis, *that it is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the Salvation of the Lord.* *

Our subject is capable of being extended to many other cases, in proof of the doctrine itself, that the hope of the true believer, is a hope that maketh not ashamed, when the love of God, is shed abroad by the Holy Ghost given unto us. But your time is exhausted.

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* Lament, 3. 26.

One or two improvements, which the subject suggests, shall close the whole, and relieve your attention.

From what hath been said, we may learn, the sole cause, of all that unsteady, and changeable frame of mind, which distinguish the state of believers in their Christian path. We feel but too little, of this glorious work of God the Holy Ghost upon our hearts. We are content with sipping now and then, of *the streams which make glad the city of God*, when we might for ever drink of *the river*. § We are looking for somewhat to recommend in the *creature*, when we might live upon the *Creator's* fulness. And hence, the soul is frequently in bondage frames, and under heart straitenings in prayer; and the poor believer, *walketh in darkness and hath no light*. Not considering, that it is the gracious design of the Holy Ghost, to empty the soul of every thing, that he would wish to call his own, on purpose to fill him, with every thing precious in Christ Jesus. And for this purpose, that he is leading him, amidst all the poverty, and weakness, and fears, and guilt, and tremblings, with which he is encompassed, to *Him*, in whom *it hath pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell, that he may receive, out of his fulness grace for grace*. And when the Holy Ghost, hath graciously performed this blessed office,

office, of shedding abroad the love of God in the heart, with a fullness proportioned to our wants, then the believer finds *a hope, that maketh not ashamed.*

The language of his heart is then changed. He doth no longer say, how shall I, a poor hell deserving sinner, venture to draw nigh to God, or *wherewith shall I come before him?* But taught by the Holy Ghost, he cries out: shall I fear to act faith, upon God's covenant promises, and my Redeemer's righteousness? Shall I go to my Father, in a spirit of bondage, when he hath owned me for his own Son by a spirit of adoption? Shall I exercise nothing but *fear*, what his very name, as revealed to me in Christ Jesus, is nothing but *love*?

Beg of God, I pray you, for larger, fuller, deeper manifestations of this precious part, of the Spirit's work. Having tasted that the Lord is gracious, desire to live wholly upon him. What the Apostle so earnestly prayed for, do you covet to know, *the love of Christ which passeth knowledge that ye may be filled with all the fulness of God.* And make this the standard of character, to which you are continually aspiring; *to forget the things which are behind and to press forward to those that are before.* Tell the Lord, you cannot rest satisfied, in present attainments

tainments, nor live upon past experiences. You have known a little, of his love, and therefore that little, makes you long for more. In a word, sit down contented, with nothing short of this; that *Christ is fully formed in your heart the hope of glory*. And this, is *the hope*, the text means, *which maketh not ashamed*: because it is the sure consequence, of the blessed operation of *the love of God, shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost given unto us*.

But what consolation, doth our subject afford, to that class of hearers, who so far from having an interest, in the hope that maketh not ashamed, are described in scripture, as *having no hope and without God in the world*.

Forgive me when I say, that I cannot but exceedingly fear, lest what *Paul* said of the Church at *Ephesus* may with equal truth be applied, more, or less, to many professing Churches, in our day: They are not only unconscious, of this work of the Holy Ghost, in shedding abroad the love of God in the heart, but as to any real purpose of vital godliness, *have never so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost*. *

Shall

* Acts 19. 2.

Shall I intreat you, my unawakened Brother, to look into the state, in which you now stand before God. Have you received the Holy Ghost since you *professed* to believe? And do not forget this one thing, that any supposed merit, in the receiver of grace, is not only unnecessary, but impossible. None were ever made *partakers of the Holy Ghost*, for any worthiness in themselves. He, whose blessed office it is, to shed abroad the love of God in the heart, is no less engaged, to *create the heart anew*, to receive it. Both the mercy, and the qualification, for the mercy, are of him. The outpourings of the Spirit, are like *the dew from the Lord, which tarrieth not for man, neither waiteth for the sons of men.* §

But though divine grace, is not suspended, upon the event of human seeking; yet when Sinners, are brought within the calls of grace, God hath said, *I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them.* †

Ask then, and ye shall receive, (for so the promise runs) seek and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you. For as a Father, knoweth how to give good gifts, unto his Children; so shall your heavenly Father give his holy Spirit to them that ask him.

May

May God graciously shed abroad his love in every heart, and fill us all *with joy and peace in believing that we may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost.* †

† Rom. 15. 13.

Sermon 7.

THE BELIEVER'S WARFARE.

Judges, 8th. Chap. 4th. Verse.

Faint yet pursuing.

THE life of the true believer in Jesus, is a series of paradoxes. Paul, the Apostle, hath sketched the strongest outlines of it, in one of his chapters to the *Corinthians*, when speaking of himself, and his few faithful companions in tribulation, he thus describes it; *As unknown, and yet well known, as dying, and behold we live; as chastened, and not killed: as sorrowful yet alway rejoicing: as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.*

And

And how unaccountable soever this may appear to the carnal mind, the fact is literally exemplified, more or less, in the history of the faithful, in all ages. They are *unknown*, and unnoticed; despised, and frequently oppressed, by the world: yet *well known*, and highly esteemed, in the sight of God. In themselves, and in all their interests, they seem to be apparently dying, to the eyes of men; yet in the midst of all, they not only live, but live everlastingly secured, from all real danger, and are *strong in the Lord and in the power of his might*. And though *chastened* from the tender affection of a Father, too wise to mistake their interests, and too gracious to be unkind in his appointments, concerning them; yet they know nothing of those rebukes of his displeasure, by which he condemns *the unbelieving world*.

Men of corrupt minds, suppose them to be always gloomy, and sorrowful; whereas in reality, they are always *rejoicing in the hope of God*. And though confessedly poor, as the *most part* of them are, in this world's poverty, and *all* of them literally so, in that poverty of spirit, which is the badge of their Christian character; yet are they enabled to impart to others of *the unsearchable riches of Christ*.

So

So that though considered in themselves as nothing, and in reality being so indeed, as to any personal possessions, of their own, yet having Jesus for their portion, in him, they may be truly said to *possess all things*.

Such is the family feature of the disciple of Christ! And his walk of faith, carries with it an exact uniformity of correspondence!

And I have often thought, that among the felicities of heaven, a portion of the enjoyments will be, to look back over the everlasting hills, and trace the wonderful path of grace, in which the Lord hath brought his people on, amidst all the difficulties, and discouragements of the way.

To observe the kind preventions of love, in the days of our unregeneracy. The display of an Omnipotent Arm, unremittingly stretched forth to keep back from death, and the grave, before the work of grace was formed in the heart. To mark down the instances of pardoning mercy *since*, in the numberless transgressions, and departures from God, by which the walk of the most upright may be traced

Z

Gracious

Gracious God ! What an huge Volume, doth every believer's history form, of the Lord's forbearance, and man's undeservings. And what a subject, will be unfolded to our view, when the whole is finished, and bound up together, in a mass of particulars : to manifest, that our merit was never made the standard of divine favour, but the sole result, of his distinguishing mercy : *who hath saved us and called us with an holy calling not according to our works but according to his own purpose and grace which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.*

And if it be reasonable to suppose, that the happiness of our future state, will gather some of its sweetness, from our being more intimately acquainted, than we now are, with the Lord's gracious superintendence, and watchings over us, in our progress through it ; it should seem to follow, that nothing can be more conducive, under God's teachings, than the carefully attending to his approaches towards us now, in the various methods by which he manifests his love to his people, *otherwise than he doeth to the world.*

My Brother ! depend upon it, though God the Spirit, hath graciously caused to be recorded, a book of sweet experiences, in his holy word,

word, in the lives of the faithful, who have gone before you in the Christian path; from whence under his teachings, you may gather perpetual instruction, and consolation, to guide and comfort you, on your way: yet doth he afford also, another book of closer experiences still, in your own life, by the perusal of which, you may trace (if your forgetful heart, do not lose the memorandums of it,) a multitude of instances, to testify his unremitting care, and watchfulness over you. And I do venture to believe, that if you were to accustom yourself, to this study, the view of past evidences of God's faithfulness, would furnish some of the best means, to strengthen your future dependence upon him, and to prepare you under his blessed influence, against any of the remaining trials, with which his providence, may see it fit to exercise you, in the unfinished period, of your present life.

A train of thought like this, hath crossed my mind in the contemplation of the subject which the short sentence of the text carries with it,
Faint yet pursuing.

The characters of whom this was said were *Gideon* and his little army, who were engaged in fighting the battles of the Lord. God had
assured

assured them of conquest; but in the moment, when they were promising themselves the victory, new difficulties and discouragements arose.

The text represents them in the heat of action. *Faint* under the many heavy assaults, which they had sustained; yet *pursuing*, as if nothing hurt, the sure destruction of the foe. Such is the spiritual warfare of the believer. From the first moment he buckles on the holy armour, in the conflicts of grace, there is no remission, until he is undressed for the grave. There can be no truce in this war. Whatever sharp skirmishes, you may have already gone through, depend upon it, more yet remains for you to encounter. And you cannot have a better testimony, that you are a true Soldier of Jesus Christ, than while carrying this motto on your banner; *faint, yet pursuing*.

It will form a very pleasing subject, and I hope no less profitable than pleasing, if under the divine teachings, we trace this state of warfare, in the believer's experience, through the variety of methods, by which grace is brought into exercise.

Perhaps

Perhaps there may be *some* present, who from being unacquainted, with the depth of the Enemy's devices, or the extent of the heart-workings through corruption, may be in the very moment I am speaking, fainting under the assaults of sin, and Satan, and exclaiming with one of old, *I shall certainly perish by the hand of the Enemy.*

And it is more than possible, there may be *others* here also, much bowed down with soul distresses, from the various impediments which obstruct their path: that their hearts are discouraged like *Israel* in the wilderness, *because of the way.*

Our subject if it be graciously directed by the Holy Ghost, will minister relief to such cases as these or at least answer one general purpose, in teaching every true believer, where to look for aid, and from what source alone, it is to be expected. Every faithful follower of Jesus, may adopt the language of the Apostle, in this particular, and say, as he did; though I can do nothing by myself, yet *I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.*

And for those characters, if any of that description be present, who are totally unacquainted,

ed, with the conflicts which arise between grace and corruption, and induce faintness in the heart, all that can be said concerning them, is this; they know nothing of religion, who know nothing of those workings. And the most deplorable state of all states is to be at peace, and rest, while *the strong man armed keepeth the palace.*

What I propose, from our present subject, is in the *first* place, to illustrate that faintness of soul, which ariseth from the contentions of grace and corruption, amidst the various exercises of it.

And *secondly* I shall go on to shew, that however *faint* the true believer is, in this spiritual warfare, he is yet *pursuing*, the prize of his high calling of God, in Christ Jesus; and is enabled to hold on, and hold out, through the grace of Christ, which is sufficient for him, and whose strength is made perfect in weakness.

First I am, according to my proposal, to illustrate the doctrine, of that faintness of soul which ariseth out of the contentions, between grace, and corruption, in the believer's experience.

And this view, of the renewed nature of man, if traced from its beginning, and carefully followed

followed up, through all its progress, until it be consummated, in glory; opens one of the most interesting subjects possible; though I confess, at the same time, it becomes very humbling to the pride of the human mind to contemplate.

From the very commencement of the renewed life, when God *who commandeth the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in the heart*; the eye of the soul, like the eye of the body, suddenly emerging from blindness, to behold the wonderful objects around, is dazzled with the overpowering brightness, and from the weakness of vision, will see things but as it were *through a glass darkly*.

The new born-babe of Christ, (as one of the *Apostles*, calls the newly regenerated believer,) like the natural infant, comes in to life, in a state of helplessness. And when that state be considered, as opposed to all the powers, of the *old-man*, who though crucified, is not dead; and though gradually perishing, yet as creatures in their dying pangs, are known sometimes to send forth the strongest efforts, for the recovery of life, so his oppositions to grace, will not unfrequently burst forth, with redoubled violence: When this state of irreconcilable opposition, between the old, and new nature, be considered, nothing can more fully demonstrate, with what languor,

languor, the believer is introduced, into his spiritual life.

And hence those expressive figures, by which the holy scriptures represent it. It is called, a *day of small things*. And indeed it is so small, as to be scarcely perceivable, and so inconsiderable when seen, that it seems to promise nothing. *A grain of mustard seed*, is the comparison also, by which it is described. And this, not only, from its being *the smallest of all seeds*, but from its being cast into the heart of man, where it is apparently buried, and lost, amidst an heap of corruption. In respect of strength, *the bruised reed*, is its truest emblem; which cannot even stand of itself and is broken with the least touch. And in reference to a warmth of piety, nothing can better represent it, than *the smoking flax*, which hath no flame, and but little heat. Such are the characters, the word of God gives, of the renewed nature, and in such a state of weakness is the believer's introduction, into the renewed life.

And as in entrance, so in progress. It is all in creature weakness, divine strength is perfected. What from corruptions, of the heart within, and oppositions of the world from without, he may well be said, to be but *faint* in his strongest moments.

Some

Some of you who best know the various exercises of the soul, in the struggles of grace, with corruption, like the *Shulamite* of old, of the two armies, in their uninterrupted skirmishes, can best describe, the faintness induced therefrom.

If my Brother, God the Holy Ghost, hath given you to see, and feel, the plague of your own heart, (and that he must have done, if you are the happy partaker of grace) and you are led to behold, the effects of it, marking all the way, as you have come along: when from heart sins, you have experienced, heart sorrows; and when from great heaviness, induced by great trials, you have feared grace, was withering in the soul and ready to die; speak, for you can best say, what fainting of the heart that is, when like the Church of old, you have been prompted to cry out, *My strength and my hope is perished from the Lord!*

Neither is this all. The soul doth not droop, and hang the head, through sorrow of heart only, from corruption within, or opposition from without, but Hell itself, is up in arms, to oppose the child of grace, in his warfare, and to dispute, inch by inch, with him, every step he takes through all the way.

A a

What

What the Apostle *Paul* declared of himself, and the faithful in his day, all the faithful find, in their experience every day. *We wrestle not* (says he) *against flesh and blood only but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness, in high places.*

And what a conflict must he have to maintain, and what fainting of the soul will such a state induce, who hath an enemy so subtle, so powerful, and so full of malignity, to contend with, and whose approaches, are for the most part, all secret and unperceived?

These general outlines of the subject, are in themselves sufficient to explain the cause of the faintness, of the life of grace in the soul: and why it is that the believer hath so much reason, to go softly all his days. And indeed, the most superficial view of the case, is in itself enough to demonstrate, that unless suitable, and seasonable supplies of grace, were continually granted him from above; totally impossible would it be for him, to resist such a legion of foes a single hour.

But perhaps it will be taking a more effectual method, to illustrate and explain the doctrine, if

if from a *general* observation of the subject, we were to examine, some more *particular* instances of it.

Suffer me therefore to enter into your experiences concerning these things, and in one, or two of the more striking testimonies of them, which may serve as examples for the rest, shew you, what I know must be the exercises, of every truly regenerated heart, in the *faintness* of which the text speaks, induced in the struggles of grace with corruption.

As sin, is the most frequent cause, for which the soul faints, and this, more, or less, becomes the complaint of all exercised believers; let us begin, with our view of this; in which if I mistake not, every child of God, may find cause enough, to explain to himself the reason of his *fainting*.

All sin, is in its very nature, a source, of sorrow; and for which, we are told, that *the whole creation, groaneth, and travaileth, in pain together*. But in the believer, it is attended, with peculiar aggravations. Hence *David*, reeking under the galling effects, in the mind of fresh contracted guilt, dwelt upon this, as the most painful circumstance

circumstance of it; *Against thee, thee only* (says he repeating the word) *have I sinned and done this evil in thy sight.* As if, conscious that sin, in all its multiform appearances, became, as it really is, directly levelled against God. And what were the workings, and faintings, of *David's* heart, upon those occasions, we learn from his many penitential expressions. *Innumerable evils* (says he) *have compassed me about: mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of mine head; therefore my heart faileth me,*

And elsewhere, he speaks of his transgressions, as having gone over his head, and having become a sore burden too heavy indeed for him to bear.

These are very strong terms, to denote the depression of soul. When sins, and the grossest of all sins, even sins against covenant-mercies, and against a Covenant-God surround the believer, and they encompass him, as a band of armed men, on every side; when they take hold of a man, as the arm of justice seizes, the self condemned criminal, by the shoulder; when a sense of their number, adds to his terror, being *more than the hairs of the head*, and a sense of their magnitude, swells the sad account, being *greater than the heaviest burden, too heavy to be born:*

born: when the whole force is accumulated together, and the soul can neither look within, but with apprehension; nor look up, with any hope: who but must faint, and drag on heavily in the path of grace, and mourning as he goeth, as one did of old, crying out; O wretched man that I am who shall deliver me from the body of this death!

But this is but *one* cause of sorrow, though indeed in its nature and consequences, it is the Parent of every other. There are multitudes beside which beset the Christian traveller, in his path, and make him go sorrowing and faint all the way.

Those withdrawals of the Holy Ghost, or the hidings of God's countenance, as they are called, in the strengthening, and refreshing influences, of his grace upon the heart: That deadness, which the soul sometimes feels, and hath too much reason to be frequently complaining of, in its desires, of approaching a throne of grace, or when engaged in acts of devotion: That awful silence at the mercy seat, which deeply exercised believers groan under, when like the prophet they say, *O Lord how long shall I cry and thou wilt not hear even cry out unto thee of violence and thou wilt not save? ** In these

* Habak. 1. 2.

these, and similar situations, well known to the faithful; who but must faint, and tire, along the heavenly road, when causes so many, and distressing to the soul, conspire to induce it?

And have you not found my Brother, (for I speak to the man that is no stranger to those heart-exercises) have you not found, that Satan hath availed himself of those dark seasons, to harrass the soul with his temptations?

What the Psalmist hath said, of the *natural* world, may with equal truth, be applied to the *spiritual*. *Thou makest darkness* (says he) *and it is night, wherein all the beasts of the forest creep forth.* For when God withdraws his shining on the soul, and darkness is induced over the mind, the enemy creeps forth from his den, and adds to the gloom tenfold darkness, by his suggestions.

Hath the temptation, never arisen in your mind, during such seasons, and while you have been deeply wounded, by reason of some fresh contracted guilt, or the supposed absence of the God of your hope; have you not been prompted to fear, that all your former prospects, were a delusion? that the voice of Jesus you never had known, neither had you any part or lot, in this matter?

matter? that what you fancied to be grace, was only some refinements of nature? And while thoughts of this distressing tendency, have been drinking up your spirits, have you never experienced that master-piece of the enemy's stratagem, which he sometimes injects into the mind, by way of hiding from what quarter it comes, when the soul is prompted to say, surely the Lord would not look on, all this while, and be silent, while Satan thus triumphs over me, if I really were in grace.

These are very common exercises I believe, in the experience of the faithful. And what their feelings, and faintings must be upon those occasions, are better conceived, than described: *The heart knoweth its own bitterness.*

One State more, by way of proving, that the life of the faithful, is a life of faintness, shall close, my present illustration, of this point of doctrine. And this, I shall take from the unhappy infirmity, the believer possesseth, but too much in common, with the carnal world, to misinterpret the providences of God.

How many, and how various, are the avenues by which distress creeps into the life of the believer, from the dark and mysterious dealings of God with his people, would be difficult to ascertain. But the mere outlines are enough.

Bereaving

Bereaving providences; straitened, and difficult circumstances: the thwarting those desires, which seemed to promise much glory to God, and great improvement to ourselves: sudden, and unexpected breaches in our persons, or in our families; the being deeply drenched in want, and poverty, while beholding the rioting excesses of the sensual; these, and the like exercises, for the trial of faith, in a gracious soul, sometimes induce great sorrow of heart. And especially, if in either of those cases, the mind is directed to connect, some past transgression, with the present affliction, as the cause. Both together, bear hard upon the soul, and induce a faintness, and trembling, which I presume, many too well know, to need my explaining. *David*, whose instance serves as an illustration, upon most occasions of the lives of the faithful, and whose whole history indeed, is but as a book of experiences, to this purpose, furnisheth a proof of the kind, I am now speaking of; and thousands beside *David*, I believe, have been brought nearly, by similar events like him, to the brink of apostacy. He tells us that his own personal sorrows, while viewing at the same time the prosperity of the ungodly, made him cherish hard thoughts of God.

He begins his relation of it, with setting this down, as a never failing maxim, that *God* is

is good to Israel. Yet in his dispensations, he could not at the first view of things, reconcile it to himself. *As for me* (says he) *my feet were almost gone, my steps had well nigh slipt. For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw their prosperity. There are no bands in their death: their strength is firm. They are not in trouble as other men: they prosper in the world: they increase in riches. But* (says David) *as for me all the day long have I been plagued and chastened every morning.**

And it was not until *David* went into the *Sanctuary of God*, that these seeming contradictions, were at all explained to him, Neither shall you, or I, be able, to account satisfactorily, for various occurrences which we meet with, in our own experience, or behold in the lives of others, but from entering under the guidance of the Holy Ghost, into the same sweet asylum. There we learn, what no human teaching can inform us, that all God's judgments are right: and all our hasty conclusions, arise, as *David's* did, from our own infirmity. Unbelief makes all objects appear, through inverted mediums, by which we are prompted, to put false constructions, on God's providences, and lose sight, of the blessed Covenant, which *is ordered in all things and sure.* No wonder then, that the believer grows faint, and languid, from his various exercises, by the way.

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These

* Psalm 73. 1, 17.

These few instances, will I hope be enough, (for your time will not favor the adding more) by way of explaining the doctrine contained in the former part of our text: that the life of the faithful is accompanied with much *fainting*.

I pause one moment, over what hath been said, before I enter upon the *second* part, of our subject; just to request, every deeply exercised soul who hears me, and whose heart perhaps, in the very moment I am speaking, is faint by reason of discouragements, no longer to wonder, at his faintings, when he sees so much cause for it, in his sins. If grace be so weak, and corruption so strong; let it rather excite your wonder, and at the same time, become the strongest of all motives, to call up your praise, that a soul, sifted like yours, in the sieve of so many, and mighty adversaries, and shaken and tossed about so violently, as you are, should not long since have fallen to the ground. If a spark of grace lives in a sea of such corruption; If a taper, so feeble, and of such small glimmering, still burns, and be kept in, notwithstanding the rudest winds are blowing upon it, from every quarter; doth it not lead you to see, and ought it not induce you as thankfully to acknowledge, that divine strength, is manifested in creature weakness?

◆ And

And if this important lesson, be taught you, by the Holy Ghost, in the experimental teachings, of your own heart, which is the best of all schools, your sharpest exercises, will ultimately prove, your sweetest comforts. For what furnisheth subject of prayer now, will hereafter produce cause of praise. Faint you may be : but lost you never can. How shall he sink, under whom, are *the everlasting arms* ? And in the mean time, let that sweet promise, be your comfort ; *He that goeth forth and weepeth bearing precious seed shall doubtless come again with rejoicing.* *

I proceed now, to the *second* object which I proposed to accomplish, namely, to shew, that however faint, the believer is, yet is he still *pursuing*, and through grace, is enabled to hold on, and hold out, against all opposition, to the attainment of the prize of the high calling of God which is in Christ Jesus.

It is the very distinguishing character of the life of grace, that God the Holy Ghost, carrieth it on in the heart of the truly regenerated believer, amidst a thousand difficulties. It appears to the man himself, upon numberless occasions, as if his hopes were all over, and his expectations

B b 2

* Psalm 126. 6.

tions perished. But this is the very process, by which divine strength, is made perfect in human weakness. However low, the life of God in the soul may seem, it is not lost: though apparently dying, it is never dead.

Neither indeed is it possible. And for this plain reason. Grace is an *immortal* spark. And therefore what is immortal, nothing *mortal* can extinguish. *Many waters cannot quench it: neither can the floods drown it.* It is an *incorruptible seed*, which liveth and abideth for ever. And how shall any corruptible principle, destroy its everlasting property? It may seemingly be long buried in the earth, and no traces of it appear. But (as the *Prophet* beautifully speaks) *it shall revive as the corn and grow as the vine.* And how doth corn revive, and the vine grow? Jesus himself explains the *one*, and common experience manifests the *other*. *Except* (says Christ) *a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die it abideth alone but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit.* And as the vine groweth out of a dry ground, and in its appearance is but a dry stick, which seems to promise nothing; so the believer whose life is hid with Christ in God, is in himself always dry, and unpromising, and in Christ alone, is his fruit found.

Such in reality, is the state of every true believer. It is all in creature weakness, divine strength

strength is made perfect. And the more feeble the Lord's people are the more occasion it affords, for the display of his power, in supporting them. The more the wall seems to be tottering; the more doth it manifest the strength of the prop, which bears it up. Hence the *Church* is described, as *coming up out of the wilderness leaning upon her beloved*.

Perhaps I shall more happily succeed, in explaining the truth of this doctrine, if I pursue the same method, as in the former part of my sermon, in descending from *general* to *particular* observations of it. For this will be to come home to men's bosoms, by illustrating the truth from their own experiences.

I will suppose then for argument sake, that some precious soul, before whom I am now speaking, may be, in the present moment, in such a degree of faintness, by reason of fresh contracted guilt, and transgressions and sin, as to be ready to give up all for lost, and is *writing bitter things against himself*.

Perhaps your offences have been attended with peculiar aggravations. You not only groan over sins of infirmity, into which, in an un-
guarded

guarded hour, you have fallen, but such as you have run into, in cooler seasons, through the impulse of unrestrained affections, and the power of temptation. Your transgressions, you will tell me, are against better knowledge, against covenant-engagements, strong convictions, and great grace, and what *David* calls *presumptuous sins*, from the commission of which, he so earnestly begged God to be kept.

I will be very ready to agree with you, that such instances arising from the frequent assaults of Sin, and Satan; are enough, to bow down the soul, and induce great heaviness of spirit. But yet, under this aggravated state of the case, still I contend, that when the believer is effectually called, to the Christian warfare, (and you will remember, that I am now considering the subject, on this presumption) however *faint* he drags on the way, he is yet *pursuing*.

And in confirmation of it, a more precious evidence cannot be desired, than what your own experience furnisheth.

You groan being burthened. Sin is not rooted out. You see, you feel, you faint, under its baleful effects daily. In the contest, by which
the

the enemy harrasseth you, your spirits are enfeebled; and from his strength, and your weakness, you find yourself too often led captive by him at his will.

But tell me my Brother, (for I appeal to the testimony of your own breast for the truth of what I say) are not these things, furnishing continual sorrow, and heaviness of heart? Do you not find, your very soul, humbled to the dust before God, by reason of this state. And would you not purchase, were it possible, an exemption from those remains of indwelling sin, with the price of every thing you possess? If such be your experience, certainly there must be grace yet living in the soul, to induce such desires, though like corn buried in the earth, it seems for a while lost, amidst the rubbish of corruption.

Moreover; there is another sweet-distinguishing character, by which we trace evidences, that the reed though bruised, is not broken, neither the smoking flax quenched; and that is, from the *sighs*, which the soul sends forth, under this state of mind for deliverance. The Apostle *Paul* felt exactly what you feel, and spoke both your, and my experience, when he said; *O wretched Man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death.*

Language

Language like this, cannot proceed, from that *sorrow of the world which worketh death*. But these are the breathings of a soul awakened, by the Holy Ghost: which feels its own corruption, which loaths itself, in its own sight, and under the deepest self abasement, and holy indignation against sin, and his own heart, is secretly leading by the Spirit to Jesus, to be delivered both from the power and guilt of it.

I defy nature, in her highest attainments, to imitate this. Nothing but grace, can lead to such things. And therefore my Brother do let me charge you, to write down these testimonies, among the memorandums of your life. For if such sweet properties, are still with you, then is that blessed promise, evidently accomplished in your experience. *I will pour out (saith God) the spirit of grace and supplication; and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn, for him as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first born.* *

While therefore you fear, that grace is totally withered, and every gift of the Holy Spirit dried up, as the grape appeareth on the vine; *He that looketh on, and who seeth, not as man seeth; saith, no! there is wine in the cluster, destroy it not*

* Zech. 12. 10.

*not for a blessing is in it.** Grace is still bound up in the heart, and its repentings are nearly kindling, when under the weight, and burden of sin, the soul is sending forth vehement breathings, after a deliverance from it.

And do my Brother, take with you, this further consideration. He who sought you, in your first estate, when you sought not him; will not leave you now, to perish in your present circumstances of evil, when your desires are towards him. Though you have made him *to serve with your sins and wearied him with your iniquities*, yet remember, what he saith; *I even I am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake and will not remember thy sins.†*

In the very hour, that you have been running from his arms by rebellion, he hath been sending after you renewed instances of his grace. Else, whence those awakenings of his holy Spirit, in your heart; Whence those faintings under sin, and longings after his favor?

Oh? it is truly refreshing, under all our lifeless frames, and doubts, and unbelief, to consider;

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* Isaiah 65. 8. † Isaiah 43. 25.

der; that amidst the unceasing praises of the redeemed in heaven, Jesus doth not for a moment, remit his attention to the wanderings, and weaknesses, of his exercised family upon earth. He sees *your* situation. He knows under what *you* groan. He beholds the power, and malice, of the Enemy. And therefore *his* grace, and not *your* strength, becomes the cause of security. Hence *David* reasons; *the wicked watcheth the righteous and seeketh to slay him. But the Lord will not leave him in his hand nor condemn him when he is judged.* He may fall, but he shall not finally fall away. He may be cast down, but God will not cast him off. For however un acceptable in themselves, they are accepted in Christ. For so the charter of redemption runs. *Mercy shall be built up for ever. I have made a covenant with my Chosen. His seed also will I make to endure for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven.*

But I must restrain these considerations, that I may not exceed the usual limits.

The illustration of the unextinguishable nature of grace, under this one point of view, in which I have been considering it, and that in the most general of all instances, inasmuch as it must, more or less, suit all cases, of the Lord's exercised

exercised family; may by a parity of reasoning, be applied, to every other. For, from hence, true believers may learn, to form proper conclusions, to their own state, and circumstances, whatever these may be, to convince them, that however faintly, they are going on the Christian path, and sorrowing as they go, yet they are still pursuing; and though *sowing in tears, they will reap in joy*. The promise to this amount is very sweet and encouraging. *He that goeth forth and weepeth bearing precious seed shall doubtless come again rejoicing bringing his sheaves with him.* *

Make application of this, to any of the various situations, by which the true believer in Jesus, is frequently discouraged in his journey, and his heart brought down through heaviness, and you will find under every one of them, how effectually the Lord hath provided, for the security of the faithful.

Are they faint, from the withdrawals of the Holy Ghost, in his refreshing and strengthening influences? Are they under a distressed state of mind, by reason of bondage frames? Do they feel heart-straitenings, in their seasons of holy

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* Psalm 126. 6.

holy ordinances? Do they find but little disposition to go to a mercy seat, and sometimes, even less comfort when there? Are they tempted to entertain hard thoughts of God, respecting his providences towards them, and hastily led to draw conclusions therefrom, as if the Lord had forgotten them?

In these, and other situations of a like nature, by which unbelief tears and harrows up the soul, the complaints, do altogether refute themselves, and carry with them, in their very bosom, an incontestible evidence, that grace is not only unextinguished, but even in full exercise in the heart.

For if the Holy Ghost, had totally withdrawn his influences; whence those earnest desires for the enjoyment of his presence, which are the effects of his own creating? If the mind was actually shut up, under bondage frames, and heart-straitenings, in seasons of worship; from whence should issue those longings of the soul, by which you mourn after God, when you do not fully enjoy him? Must there not evidently, be grace in the heart, when like the *Church* of old, you send forth, that sweet breathing: *with my soul have I desired thee in the night, yea with my spirit within me will I seek thee early.*

In

In a word, conflicts of grace, with corruption, evidently testify, that the warfare still continues. Though *faint you are yet pursuing*. If the *burning bush* be not consumed, it is because God is in it. If the *worm Jacob* thresh the mountains; it is because the *God of Jacob* is his refuge, and *underneath are the everlasting arms*.

Your God, your Jesus, is leading you by this very process, through the most precious exercises of the soul. The furnace may be hot, but the Refiner himself, sits by, to keep the fire duly under. There shall not a particle of the pure gold be lost; it is only the scum which must be taken away.

The trials of the faithful are great. But their triumphs are not less sure. *I will bring them* (saith the same Almighty Promiser) *through the fire, and will refine them, as silver is refined, and will try them as Gold is tried*. But observe what follows. *They shall call on my name, and I will hear them. I will say, it is my People: And they shall say, the Lord is my God.* *

Hence therefore, though all the powers of hell, and corruption unite: the Lord Jesus must

* Zech. 13. 9.

must bring his people off victorious. His name, his honor, his glory, are all concerned in the everlasting safety of his Church and people. And let the heart of man imagine, if it be possible, what can afford subject of equal praise, to the Redeemer, as that of bringing home all his tried ones safe at last, through all their difficulties. The undeviating rectitude of an Angel, cannot bring equal glory to Jesus, as that of a saved Sinner. And to see a poor, sinful, dying worm of the earth, still preserved, amidst an host of mighty foes, and at length made a conqueror, over all by the blood of the Lamb: this is what opens a new source of joy in heaven, and calls up that song of praise, which *John* heard, in anticipation, by the ear of faith, and will be sung, in the full assembly of the first born, when the Lord hath finished the trials of his people. *Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.**

And what is the result of all, that I have been saying, but this: If true believers in Christ, are thus necessarily faint, yet pursuing; let it be proclaimed this day, in every Church, throughout the earth, that Jesus, is the strength
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* Rev. 12. 10.

of his people. He is *the hiding place from every wind, and a covert from every tempest. He is as rivers of water in a dry place and as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.*

And hear, in what a gracious strain of tenderness, he speaks to every exercised soul. *Fear thou not for I am with thee. Be not dismayed, for I am thy God. I will strengthen thee: yea I will help thee: yea I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.**

And while Jesus thus graciously speaks, to the ~~weakness~~ ^{Weaklings} of his household, to support them in their drooping seasons, I would desire them always to keep in remembrance, that these cordials of the Redeemer, they will need more or less *all the way*. A total exemption from sin, and sorrow belongs only, to that blessed climate, where *none of the inhabitants shall any longer say, I am sick*. But in the present mixed region, of things, through which the believer is travelling, towards the possession of it, the atmosphere will be frequently cloudy. And while *without are fightings, within will be fears*.

But how sweet the thought. *There is a rest which remaineth for the people of God.* Every
step

* Isaiah 41. 10.

step we take, is one the nearer to the attainment. Every difficulty in the way, is one the less to encounter. Like boys at school, waiting the vacation, we ought to cut off the daily notch, which marks the number, unto the breaking up, and when the last comes, the carriage will be at the door, to take us home to our Father's house, to return no more for ever.

My Brother! Are you *faint* by reason of sin? Beg of God the spirit to make application of that precious blood of Jesus Christ, which *cleanseth from all sin*. Are you cast down by means of the buffetings of the Enemy? Live upon that blessed promise, which ~~says~~ *the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly*. Are you mourning under the hidings of God's countenance? Pray for grace, to act faith upon that soul-reviving scripture, which assures you, that the hour is at hand, when *Jesus the morning star* shall appear, and *the Lord will be your everlasting light, and thy God thy glory*. In a word; whatever peculiar exercises you sustain, you will find some promises suited to your situation, to live upon; and never forget that they are all your own, and *in Christ Jesus are all yea and amen*.

But

But what shall I say to *you*, who from being unacquainted with soul-distresses, with which the faithful, are so deeply exercised, can know nothing of their faintness, and consequently desire none of their comforts. I have often thought, what a melancholy state that man is in, who is a stranger to covenant-mercies. And in what awful terms the scripture hath marked the termination of such a life. *Woe unto you that are rich for ye have received your consolation. Woe unto you that are full for ye shall hunger. Woe unto you that laugh now for ye shall mourn and weep.* *

Alas ! * if all your consolation, all your fulness, all your laughter, be derived from creature comforts, and confined to the narrow limits of this life, what will you do, when the brook is dried up ? Surely I have frequently said, carnal men must begrudge the rapid waste of time. And the reflection of every day, when past, if they reflect at all, ought to be, “ there is another day gone, by which so much of all our happiness is over. ”

But I turn from a subject, so abundantly distressing, just to add, that I hope no faint soul will depart, while Jesus is present, on purpose, that

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* Luke 6. 24, 25.

that *the hungry may not go empty away*. Let it be proclaimed, once more through the Congregation, and may God the Spirit, give it a saving power, in every heart: **THE LORD JESUS IS THE STRENGTH OF HIS PEOPLE.** *He giveth power to the faint, and to them, that have no might, he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint, and be weary and the young men shall utterly fail. But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength they shall mount up with wings as eagles they shall run and not be weary and they shall walk and not faint.*

Sermon 8.

THE COMING OF JESUS AS THE SAVIOUR OF
HIS PEOPLE.

Phillippians, 3rd Chap. 20th Verse.

*From whence we look for the Saviour, the Lord
Jesus Christ,*

THERE is an infinite degree of sweetness, in those words of the Apostle, as they concern, the true believer in Jesus. *From whence we look for the Saviour.* That is, not in his general character, as *Judge*, of the world; but in his peculiar relation, as the *Saviour* of his people. Not coming to judge *them*, as if the event of that

that great day of God, became a matter of doubt, and uncertainty, to the faithful; and they knew not, whether it would terminate, to their everlasting happiness, or misery: but looking for him, as their Saviour carries with it the conviction, that having known, and experienced, the certainty of his salvation, in this life; they are perfectly secured, in all the blessings connected with it, in another. JESUS having already *saved them, and called them with an holy calling*, they are now waiting, *in full assurance of faith*; that when he shall come *to judge the world in righteousness, and minister true judgment to the people*, they shall have confidence and *not be ashamed before him at his coming*. They have acknowledged *him* for their Saviour, before men upon earth. And he will acknowledge *them*, for his redeemed ones, before his Father, and the holy angels in heaven.

Fancy but for a moment, that either one of you, were so much under the sweet influence of the blessed Spirit, as to have this conscious assurance of a saving interest, in the merits of the Lord Jesus; and that in the expectation of his return to Judgment, you could fully assume the language of the Apostle; what a resource of the most permanent happiness, would always be opening therefrom, to the soul? What an accession of joy, would it give to all your comforts?

forts? What an alleviation to all your sorrows? What indeed, but one continued unvarying state of peace and tranquillity of mind, must that man enjoy, amidst the mutability of all things around him, who in expectation of the great day of God could hail the Judge, returning as his Saviour.

Our text, is but short, yet in its bosom, it contains a volume, of the most precious subject, for discourse.

When the Apostle thus expressed himself, as looking for the Saviour, it is as if he had said; In our expectation of Christ's return, to judgment, we that are the truly regenerated followers of the Lamb, look for him, under this peculiar character, as the Saviour of his people. For by the blessed Spirit's work on our heart, having been awakened from our mortal slumbers, and *convinced of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment*; we have learnt with full conviction, under his divine teaching, that in all the Lord Jesus did, and suffered, upon earth, when he came to redeem our nature, he acted, as the representative, and sponsor of his people. And from the same heavenly Teacher, we are perfectly assured, that the righteousness he then wrought out, and brought

brought in, was an *everlasting righteousness*, which is *unto all and upon all them that believe*. And by that precious oblation, of his body upon the cross, when *he offered himself without spot to God*, he hath fully *put away sin by the sacrifice of himself*. For by that *one offering he hath for ever perfected them that are sanctified*. So that, *we have redemption in his blood, even the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace*.

Hence therefore, *there is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit*. And, if there be no possibility of condemnation, there can be no possibility of trial. For what leaves nothing doubtful, as to the issue of event, can never subject the event, to uncertainty. Both the condemnation for sin, and the punishment due to the breach of it, in our nature, the Lord Jesus himself sustained, in his own sacred person, when as the representative of his people, *he witnessed before Pontius Pilate a good confession*. And when in consequence thereof, he died, *the just for the unjust to bring us unto God*. Hence therefore as both law, and justice have exacted, and obtained, all their demands, which they had upon his people, from Him, their Almighty surety when he bore their guilt, and sustained their punishment; most evident it is, that the *bondsman* having paid the debt, the *principal debtor*

debtor must be free. And therefore, there is now, there can be, *no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.*

So that, when the Lord Jesus shall come, in the clouds to Judgment, his people, shall not be arraigned for sins, both the guilt, and punishment of which, he himself hath borne; but the process of that solemn day as far as it concerns them will be to hear him proclaim, before a congregated world, that they are the gift of the Father's love, and the purchase of his own most precious merits and blood. And having, by the blessed Spirit's work upon their hearts, formed them anew, for himself, and his glory, in his own lovely image; united them to himself by an everlasting union; clothed them in his own spotless righteousness; made them altogether comely, in his own graces; and in every way, made them to be *meet partakers of the inheritance with the Saints in light*: he is now come, according to his own assured promise, *to take them to himself, that where he is, there they may be also.*

Under the impression of these things we may reasonably suppose, the mind of the Apostle was filled, when he expressed himself in the words of the text. In the expectation of the great day of God, we look for the *Saviour*, the Lord Jesus Christ. That

That this is the sum, and substance, of the Apostle's meaning, is evident, both from what he had said, in some few verses, immediately preceding the text, as well as the general analogy of scripture, on this interesting doctrine.

Paul, had been speaking just before, of the hopeless condition of those, whose lives bore a melancholy witness, that while professing the form of Godliness, they were destitute of the power of it. *Many walk*, (says the Apostle) *of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping: that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ. Whose end is destruction: whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame: who mind earthly things.* And then to shew, the striking contrast, of such an awful state, to that of the real possessors of vital godliness, who are justified in the blood, and righteousness of Jesus, and in consequence live in the enjoyment of union, with his person, and communion in his graces; the Apostle adds, *for our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour the Lord Jesus Christ.* Our conversation, is above, even while living here below. We are sending forth our affections, and our desires, after him, in whom our lives are hid. And *when he, who is our life shall appear; we shall appear with him, in glory.* Hence we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.

And

And we derive the same assurance, on this grand point, from the general analogy of scripture. The word of God, which represents the coming of the Lord to Judgment, as full of terrors to the wicked; and awfully declares, concerning them, that *they shall be punished with everlasting destruction, from his presence*; doth as plainly express, that *he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired, in all them that believe*. And while the expectation, of this day of God, is said, to be to the *one*, a certain *fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation*: to the *other* it is called, a *looking for of that blessed hope of the glorious appearing of the Great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ*.

The very different prospects therefore, which this day is declared to open, to the different characters, of *him that feareth God*; from *him that feareth him not*: can only be explained, upon this principle, of what the Apostle saith, in the text: that true believers in Christ, look for the Lord Jesus in the sweet Character of their *Saviour*.

And hence it is, that we find the sacred writers, speaking of the expectation of it, with so much rapture, and delight. *Jude the Apostle*,
calls

calls it, *looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life*. And *Peter the Apostle*, if possible in yet stronger expressions, of holy faith, and joy, declares that it is a *looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God*. As if it was a day devoutly desired, and longed for, by the faithful. A thing impossible, upon the presumption, that the smallest possible uncertainty, was remaining, concerning the event of it to the faithful. And lest any should be tempted to suppose, that these are privileges peculiar only to the Apostles; *Paul* at once, removes all such ideas, by declaring, that the same crown of glory, which he knew was laid up for himself, the *righteous Judge at that day would give not only to him but to all them that loved his appearing*.

Do you love his appearing? If you say how am I to know? The answer is direct. You have already *loved his appearing*, if so in the work of his Holy Spirit, upon your heart, in converting you, from sin to salvation. You *have loved*, and *do love his appearing* in every renewed visit, of his grace. You *love his appearing* in every instance where he converts others, from darkness, to light, and from the power of Satan, unto God. You *love his appearing*, in every manifestation, which he makes of himself, in the deliverance or comfort, of any of his exercised family
upon

upon earth. And as all these are but so many dawns of that glorious day when he will arise with full brightness, upon every awakened soul, certainly you must desire, to see grace, consummated in glory, and therefore you are among that happy number, of whom *Paul* spake, when he said, *we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.*

Accepting the words of the text, in this point of view, and they open to our meditation, a very sweet and refreshing subject, to comfort the heart of every true believer, in his passage from grace to glory.

What I propose, from the review of it, as God the Holy Ghost shall be pleased to enable, is this; in the *first* place to consider the ground of assurance, by which the faithful, are authorized, to look forward to the coming of the Lord Jesus, in this engaging point of view, to expect him as their Saviour. And when I have accomplished this purpose, in the confirmation of the doctrine, I shall go on to a *second* branch of the subject, to bring before you, *some* of the many peculiar privileges of the believer, who is taught of the Holy Ghost, to be living in the daily exercise,

ercise, of this *blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the Great God, and our Saviour, Jesus Christ.*

And while I very earnestly beg the closest attention of all that hear me, to the investigation, of a subject so truly interesting, as it is in itself, and so highly calculated under divine grace, to comfort every true believer, in all his exercises, during his eventful pilgrimage; I do more earnestly yet bespeak the prayers of the faithful, that both speaker and hearer, may be so brought under his gracious influences, *who teacheth not as man teacheth*, that the *awakened* may be refreshed, and the *unawakened* concerned, and both retire from our ordinance of worship, with more earnest desires, than when they came here, *to know the truth, that the truth, may make them free.* Come Holy Ghost, Eternal God! Spirit of Truth! Complete every one of thy precious offices in our hearts. Lead us into all truth; build us up in our most holy faith: keep our souls in the love of God; *looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.* Amen.

According to my proposal, I am in the *first* place, to consider, the ground of assurance, by which the faithful are authorized to look forward

ward to the coming of the Lord Jesus, in this sweet point of view, and expect him as their Saviour.

That becomes a very happy method, in the investigation of divine truths, (and I desire you, to take particular notice of it, upon all occasions) when in the confirmation of any one point of the doctrines of the gospel, we are enabled to appeal, to the direct testimony, of each of the Persons of the Godhead.

As the raising up our lost nature, from the ruins of the fall, occupied their joint-attention, and is the result of their joint-work; so is it very delightful, to behold how each concurs, and co-operates, to give belief in the heart of the faithful, to all the grand, and important mysteries, of our holy religion.

Believers, are introduced into all the privileges of the gospel, when according to the command of the Redemer, they are baptized into the joint-name, of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. So again they are equally blessed, in their joint-name, as appears, by the Apostle's prayer, of benediction, when he desires, that *the grace of the*

the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, may be with the faithful. And hence therefore, it is from the concurring operation, of the whole Persons, in the Godhead, that the work of grace, is carried on, until it be consummated in glory; when the believer is brought home, and comes to receive *the end of his faith even the salvation of his soul.*

The unfolding these glorious truths, in all their fulness, and majesty, is reserved for that ripened state of existence, when our faculties will be competent to their perfect apprehension, and *we shall know, even as we are known.* But, in the mean time, God doth not leave himself without witness, in the hearts of his people, respecting them as far as *his* praise, and *their* welfare is concerned.

And perhaps, in no one point of assurance, in divine truths, where each of the Persons of the Godhead, graciously concurs in their testimony, is this more discoverable, than in the very one, to which by the doctrine of the text, I am called to prove. I mean, the authority given to the true believer in Jesus, to be always looking forward for his coming, under this precious view of him, as his Saviour.

Suffer

Suffer me only to assume for a principle, what I hope none present, will be disposed to deny, that man, both by nature, and by practise, needs a Saviour; being thoroughly conscious, that in himself he can never be justified before God, and I shall then venture to persuade myself, that the ground of assurance, for every truly regenerated believer to expect the Lord Jesus at his coming, as his Saviour, is a doctrine so fully founded, on the express testimony of each of the Persons of the Godhead, as to carry with it, every evidence which God hath judged needful to give, or man is capable of receiving, in the present state.

For the better apprehension of the subject, and to render the investigation of it, as clear as possible, I shall consider the evidences distinctly as they arise: in the *first* point of view out of the Character, and Offices of the Lord Jesus Christ. And *secondly*, as they result from the Almighty Father's appointment of redemption, in his covenant-engagements. And *thirdly*, as they are found in the Holy Ghost's operations, in the confirmation of the whole, in the believer's heart. And these unitedly considered, will I hope be found to form, the most perfect, and satisfying assurance of the doctrine.

And *first* to being with that part of the evidence,

dence, as it ariseth out of the Redeemer's character, and Offices, in the great work of redemption.

Very evident it must be, to the smallest consideration, that in all the Lord Jesus did, or suffered, upon earth, in the accomplishment of salvation, for his people, he acted, as their substitute, and surety. For in himself, he certainly could have needed neither. And to what purpose else, did he assume a body such as our's, to fulfil a law which he had never broken, and to die on the cross a sacrifice for sins which he had never committed?

And as from the Purity of his nature, it was impossible, he could ever have broken the divine law, of consequence he must for ever, considered as to himself, be exempt from all possible punishment for the supposed breach of it. Hence therefore, it will necessarily follow, that in all he did, and suffered, he acted as the representative of his people. For on no other account whatever, can his character, or offices be explained.

Nay so far indeed, is the law from being fulfilled, in any other sense, by its exactions on
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the person, of the Lord Jesus, that it would become a breach of its own principles. And the very maxim of equity, which prescribes *an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth*, is broken, when demanding either from the Lord Jesus, unless, the righteousness he wrought, and the sufferings he sustained, be accepted for his people.

This state of the doctrine, as it relates to our present subject, is in my apprehension, so very clear, and unanswerably conclusive, that I do beg of you, it may be attended to, with an earnestness, suitable to its importance.

If then we consider the Lord Jesus Christ, in this endearing character, as our surety, and representative, when assuming our nature, and in that nature, fulfilling all righteousness, and expiating all iniquity, by the sacrifice of himself: the conclusion is obvious; all that he did, and all that he suffered, was for us, and in our stead, and not for himself. *If he was made under the law, it was, to redeem them that were under the law, that they might receive the adoption of sons. If he, who knew no sin, became sin for us, it was, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.* If he took our name, and fulfilled our duties, and bore our punishment, nothing can

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can be more evident than that *the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his stripes we are healed*. The debt therefore being paid, the debtor must be free. The *Surety*, having answered all demands, the *Principal*, is in consequence released. *Both*, cannot be responsible, for this would be demanding a double recompence, which is inconsistent with the rule of equity. And hence it follows, by the plainest, and most undeniable evidence, that every truly awakened Sinner, in whose heart, the sense of sin, and the dependance on Christ, for salvation, is wrought, by the operation of the Holy Ghost, is taught not to look forward, to the day of judgment, for the hour of redemption as a matter then only to be obtained; but to depend upon it as being already accomplished, and to expect the Lord Jesus in that day, in his coming, as his Saviour.

But though this consideration of the subject, be very sweet and precious, yet blessed be God, this is not all. It might still be made, and it hath indeed been made, the question of great earnestness in many a heart; how am I to know, that redemption work, as wrought by the Lord Jesus, is accepted by God the Father for *me*? The solemn language of scripture, on this momentous point, declareth, without reserve, or qualification, *the soul that sinneth it shall die*. What authority therefore can I have, who am a
 poor,

poor, self condemned sinner, to believe, that *my* sins can be transferred ; or that the Lord Jesus acted as *my* Sponsor, in all his doings, and sufferings upon earth, for the iniquities of his people.

In answer to this most interesting question, our *second* point of discourse, concerning it, happily comes in to our aid, and proves to us, by an authority not to be controverted, that in all the Lord Jesus did, and suffered, upon earth, when accomplishing redemption, it was by the express appointment, approbation, and pleasure, of Almighty God.

This view of our subject, is also most highly important, and therefore, let me again request, a proportioned degree of closeness of application to it, for its clear apprehension.

I will be very free to confess, that strictly, and properly speaking, according to the nature of things in the common concerns of life, as they relate to the offences, which arise among men, it is totally impossible, for one man's sins, to be transferred to another; or that by the sufferings of one, the guilt of another, can be taken away,

or

or the merited punishment remitted. But I hope, that this kind of reasoning, as it relates to transactions among men, will never be brought forward, as suitable to form a standard, for judging, what may, or may not, be proper, in relation to our offences, towards God. Every thing surely puts on a very different aspect here. And if it can be at all supposed, that God himself, the injured party, graciously condescends to point out a way, and such a way, let me observe, as if he had not pointed out, no human, or even angelic being, ever could have thought of; (and which by the bye, is among the strongest convictions of its truth) then it will of course follow, that what comes from God himself, on this point, can never be liable to error, and must come recommended to our warmest approbation.

In the instance now under consideration, wherein God not only admits a substitute for sin, but commends his love to our particular notice, by the gracious act in giving his only Son, for the express purpose, we see, that every thing in it, corresponds to the highest notions we can form, of the greatness, and holiness, of his nature; and at the same time, to our noblest conceptions of his mercy and grace. For the infinite dignity of Him, who becomes the ransom, and the authority of Him, by whom that

that ransom is appointed, gives at once, the most decided sanction, to the whole; and proves, that in all the Lord Jesus did, and suffered for his people, he acted as much by his Father's appointment, as by his own voluntary will, and pleasure. It was God the Father, who gave his only Son, as a Covenant, for his people. It was God the Father, which anointed him, with the Holy Ghost, to the office of Redeemer. It was God the Father, which assisted him, and sustained him, in every part of the accomplishment of it. And it was God the Father, which promised him, that *when he had made his soul an offering for sin he should see his seed, he should prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord should prosper in his hands. He should see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied.*

Hence therefore, nothing can be more evident, than that God the Father, hath afforded, as strong an evidence, as the case can admit of, in the present life, that in the salvation, the Lord Jesus hath wrought out, for his people, it was as much the result of his appointment, as it originated in the Redeemer's love; and consequently, in the expectation of all true believers in Christ, they are authorized, on both considerations, to look for him, at his second coming, to judge the world, as their Saviour.

Still,

Still, however gratifying these united testimonies are, and conclusive as they ought to be considered by the faithful, to satisfy the most scrupulous mind, on the grand article of justification before God; there is one point more necessary to finish the evidence, and that is, the blessed Spirit's witnessing to our spirits, concerning these great truths of God.

Though fully convinced, by the former testimonies of the doctrine itself, as a doctrine full of comfort to the faithful; yet the believer may truly say, I want to know, and feel my own personal interest, in these glorious truths. A conscious sense, of the faith itself, unless followed by a conscious assurance of a real participation in its blessings, will leave me still in doubt, whether in the expectation of the great day of God, I am to look for the Lord Jesus Christ as *my* Saviour. And the concurrence of this testimony, was what I proposed to consider, under the *third* particular.

It is the peculiar office of God the Holy Ghost, to accomplish in the hearts of the faithful, this grand assurance of divine truths; and all indeed is confirmed by the strongest of evidences, when he taketh of the things of Jesus, and sheweth unto the soul.

Now

Now the Holy Ghost hath fully attested, that Redemption work was finished, and both law, and justice satisfied, by what the Lord Jesus had done and suffered, when by his power, he is said to have arisen from the dead. For the Apostle very particularly expresses this momentous testimony, when he says, that *Christ was justified in the Spirit.*

And the Holy Ghost as fully confirms the same assurance, to the heart of the Believer, that God the Father hath accepted the Redemption work of Jesus, as the surety of his people, when in every individual instance, in confirmation of it he descends as the gift of God upon the mind of the faithful, *to convince of sin of righteousness and of judgment.* So that in every case, where the Spirit from on high hath been poured out, and these blessed effects wrought in the soul, there is the concurring testimony of God the Holy Ghost, to the same precious doctrine, with the Father and Son, witnessing to the believer's experience, and teaching him, in the expectation of Jesus's return, to look for him as the Saviour.

Now put all these things together, and consider in one mass of particulars, how each of the Persons of the Godhead, who have co-operated
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in the great work of Redemption, have concurred also, in certifying to the truth of it: and I venture to believe that you will agree with me, that the Apostle *Paul* was perfectly authorized, to adopt the sentiment of the text, and of consequence all true believers, like him, the same, and in the prospect of Christ's coming in the clouds to judgment, to say, *we look for the Saviour the Lord Jesus Christ.*

If I have been happy enough to succeed, in producing evidences, to the confirmation of the doctrine itself, as I proposed under the *first* branch of my discourse; I come now to the *second* object intended from it, namely to bring before you, *some* of the many peculiar privileges of the believer, who is living in the daily exercise of this blessed hope of *the glorious appearing of the Great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.*

And on this point, the only difficulty is, where to make selections. For it enters into every part of life, and is diffused through the whole of conduct. The blessed assurance of being in a state of reconciliation with God, and *having* (as the Apostle calls it) *peace with him through our Lord Jesus Christ;* opens an everlasting source of

of consolation, and joy, through all the departments of religious, social, and personal life. Nay indeed, so highly interesting, is the belief of this precious doctrine, to the proper enjoyment of any one event of prosperity, or to the alleviation of any of the afflicting circumstances of adversity, that I cannot see, how any true, or solid happiness can be found, but in the hope at least, if not in the conviction, of its reality.

Until I know that I am brought into this state, how can I go to God in a way of duty, or be able to explain his intentions towards me, in any of the methods of his providences? But, if from a well grounded hope, under the Spirit's teaching, that I, *who was once afar off, am now brought nigh, by the blood of Christ*: and that personally considered, *I have redemption in his blood, even the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace*; laying this, as the sure foundation of acceptance, I come to God, no longer under the Spirit of bondage, and fear, but under the Spirit of adoption, and grace. I am then authorized to call him, Abba, Father. And, as the Father of mercies, and God of all grace, I look up to him, in every approach of sacred worship, and eye his dispensations to-
wards

wards me in a way of wisdom, and goodness, and mercy, in every providence.

A few instances will serve to explain, and at the same time, answer the purpose, for similar observations, as may, by a parity of reasoning, be applied to all the other circumstances, in which the doctrine, is capable of having influence.

To begin with that part, which is certainly the highest, and most important; as it relates to our communion with God, in a way of ordinances, and sacred seasons of worship.

It is impossible to draw nigh to God, in any one act of religion with comfort, when we consider God, simply as he is in himself, and abstracted from his covenant-relation to us, in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. Every part of Scripture, represents God to our ideas, *as of purer eyes than to behold iniquity*. The law of God demands a purity in the creature, for the due approaching unto him, which no man possesses. *I will be sanctified* (saith God) *in them that come nigh me*. And every man's breast, if he attends to what passes within, bears

bears sufficient impressions, to manifest, that there can be nothing but a mixture of apprehension, and terror, and fear, in all approaches to God, if the acceptance of our persons, and our worship, rested upon the merit, or worthiness, with which either was accompanied.

But how very precious is it, to a truly awakened soul, who under the Spirit's teaching, hath been *convinced of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment*, to behold the gracious provision made for the acceptance, both of his person, and offering, in the covenant-righteousness, and intercession of the Lord Jesus Christ? He enters into the full meaning of the Apostle's words, and feels the encouragement they afford to the soul, when he says, *having boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus: and having such an high Priest over the house of God let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith.* For by virtue of an interest, in the Person, and Righteousness of the Lord Jesus, as his Almighty Covenant-head, and Mediator; he is enabled to enter into the sacred presence of God, in all the ordinances of grace here, as he is assured of being introduced thereby, into the kingdom of glory hereafter.

Hence

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Hence there will be no bondage-frames, if grace be in exercise, and God the Holy Ghost is leading the believer to a mercy seat, in, and through, the blood, and righteousness, of Jesus. *Perfect love* (saith the Apostle) *casteth out fear*. I am going, the soul will say, to my God, and Father, in Christ Jesus. I know that in myself, I am utterly unworthy to be called his son. I have been an enemy, to him, by wicked works. But he hath said, *let him take hold of my strength to make peace with me and he shall make peace with me.* * Lord I am come, (the soul echoes, in reply, to the gracious precept, and assurance,) and find peace in the blood of the cross,

My Brother! Pause over the consideration, of this mighty privilege, and see, what a volume of persuasions it contains, for every renewed opportunity, of drawing nigh a throne of grace, in all holy ordinances.

Are you acquainted with that exercise of the soul, which ariseth out of the view of indwelling corruption? And do you not know, the sweetness of that precious scripture, which authorizes you in your seasons of worship, to look up, and behold Him, who appears, as your *Advocate* with

* Isaiah 27. 5.

with the Father Jesus Christ the righteous and who is the propitiation for your sins?

Do your cold prayers, not unfrequently freeze upon your lips, and the conscious sense of the impurities with which they are accompanied, induce fear, and apprehension, how they will be received? What a relief to the mind doth God the Holy Ghost give, when he enables you by faith, to behold that Mighty Angel, before the Altar with his golden Censer, offering up *your* prayers, with the much incense of his own merits! *

Are your lips so closed at times, and your mind so confused, that you know not how to pray, or what to pray for? Can it fail to refresh the soul, under all, and every state of heart-straitenings, when God the Holy Ghost points to the Great Intercessor, in his adorable Character, going in before the throne in his Priestly vestments, making all needful requests for his people!

In such seasons, how very sweet is that blessed promise, and encouraging assurance of
 God,

* Rev. S. 3.

God, brought home to the heart: *I create the fruit of the lips, peace, peace, to him that is afar off, and to him that is nigh, saith the Lord, and I will heal him.* †

Nothing can more decidedly shew the vast, and infinite importance, of the thing itself, that the soul must be brought, into an assurance, of having peace with God through Jesus Christ, and have a well grounded authority, of looking up to him as *his* Saviour, before there can be any real enjoyment of God in ordinances, or as the Church beautifully expresses it, to *sit under his shadow with great delight and his fruit made sweet to the taste.*

But the blessed effects of such a state, are not confined to seasons of worship only; they enter, into every department of existence, and from the chief source of felicity, in all our comforts, and the grand sweetener of all our sorrows.

In social life, the approbation of our friends, is made doubly pleasing, when we are able to connect with it the approbation of our God. The conscious assurance, of being at peace with him, adds a tenfold sweetness, to the peace we enjoy in the world.

On

† Isaiah 57. 19.

On the contrary, what is that which David calls, *the strife of tongues*, or the condemnation of the ungodly, when the soul can adopt the sentiment of the apostle, and say, *it is God that justifieth who is he that condemneth?*

And what an accession of joy, must it give, the brightest hour, the believer is privileged to taste, in his passage through the world, to be able always to add to it, the pleasing prospect, of that day of God, when Jesus his Saviour, and Judge, is coming to receive him to mansions of everlasting felicity?

It is a well known fact, that let a sinner be placed, in the happiest situation the world can form, yet, if in the fullest enjoyment of his fancied festivity, a single thought of futurity, crosses the mind, like the hand writing on the wall, before the *impious monarch* we read of, this alone, is enough to throw to the ground, all the props of his happiness.

And if in the very zenith of prosperity, the sinner is made sometimes to tremble, like *Felix*, at the prospect of a judgment to come: what shall support the soul, in seasons of adversity?

A

A portion of sorrow; more, or less, must dash every man's cup with bitterness; and the happiest life of sinners, cannot find a requiem from sorrow altogether. What a most deplorable state of misery, must that man's mind have been in, when he said, *I am sore distressed. For the Philistines make war against me: and God is departed from me.* * To be at once deprived of all resources! Given up by the world, and forsaken of God!

But to the believer, the consciousness of being now in a justified state before God, and the expectation of the coming of Christ, as his Saviour to close all the afflictions and trials of this life in everlasting glory, gives an inward peace, and tranquility, to the mind, which reconciles during the darkest hour, every intervening providence, and enables him to see so much of God, in every dispensation, that he is sure the termination of it, must be to the glory of the Lord, and to his own furtherance in happiness. *I know Lord (he will say) thy judgments are right and that thou in very faithfulness hast afflicted me.* †

In a word; temptations, and trials, and sickness, nay even death itself, is in the Christian's inventory

* Sam: 28. 15. † Psalm 119. 75.

inventory of good things, when once the soul is secured in the merits, and righteousness, of the Lord Jesus. For looking forward to his coming as a *Saviour*, every thing is at peace with the believer. *Though I walk* (says David) *through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil, for thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.* It is but a *walk*, not a resting place. It is but the *valley* of the shadow of death; not even the *shadow* itself. And were it the *whole shadow*, what would this be to the believer when the *substance* is not there? The *body* of death, Jesus sustained the whole of it, on the cross; it is only the *skeleton* now, left to his people. And while passing through this, the *rod* of the Saviour's power, and the *staff* of his righteousness, are competent; not only to uphold, but to comfort, all the way. Well might the Apostle, and like him, every true believer, supported by this eternal refuge, exult in the dying hour, and say, *O death where is thy sting O Grave where is thy victory. The sting of death is sin and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God who giveth me the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Our subject puts on a very different aspect, in its application, to the different characters
which

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which make up life. Like the *Pillar* of cloud, in the camp of *Israel*, it forms a bright, and pleasing light, to the people of God; while in the same moment, to his enemies, it casts a deadly shade of darkness, and despair.

My unawakened Brother! have you ever considered, with the seriousness the subject demands, the sure events of that great day of God? Hath it never struck you, what inexpressible agonies must invade the hearts of those, who shall then be found on the wrong side?

Suppose the archangel's trumpet, was now to sound; and that voice was heard, bursting through every tomb; *arise ye dead and come to judgment*. Would you venture, could you indeed hazard, your everlasting welfare, for acceptance with God, upon any thing, you can call your own righteousness?

Pause over the question, and for God's sake, dismiss it not, until under divine grace, it hath awakened your mind, to an enquiry, proportioned to its vast importance.

There

There are seasons in every man's life, in which, if the heart might speak out, it would confess, that all is not, what it should be. And if in this day of safety, the mind suggests such apprehensions, what think you will arise within, on the subject, in the day of danger?

If a man's own mind tells him, (as that it must sometimes if it be not hardened up, to all the possibilities of self deception,) that he could not always plead his good intention now; how will it then appear to his own view, when the film shall be taken off from his eyes, and he comes to learn, when it be too late, that *the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked.*

And do not forget my Brother, in your expectation of this awful day of decision, that it is a *perfect* righteousness, either in yourself, or in your surety, you must have, to find acceptance with God. The law admits of no abatement. It relaxeth not a single precept. The *curse* still hangs over every one, as much unrepealed as ever, who refusing the covenant of grace, and trusting in a covenant of works, continueth not *in all things, which is written in the law to do them.*

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Oh!

Oh! that God the Holy Ghost, may commission my poor Sermon, to the heart of any one unconcerned sinner present, that he may *see the things which make for his everlasting peace, before they are for ever hid from his eyes. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and so ye perish from the way when his wrath be kindled but a little: Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.*

As for you, who from long conviction, of the emptiness, and insufficiency, of all creature confidences, for acceptance before God, have fled for refuge, to the hope that is before you: and the language of whose heart is, *in the Lord have I righteousness and strength:* never lose sight I beseech you, if it be possible, of the precious expectation of the Lord Jesus, under this sweet and endearing character, in which we have been considering his second coming to judge the world, as *your Saviour.*

You have been fully taught, under the Spirit's teaching, your own sin, and the perfect righteousness of the Lord Jesus. You have discovered, that this is a *Covenant* righteousness, in
which

which, the Father's mercy, the Saviour's love, and the Spirit's grace, are all equally concerned, in the salvation of sinners.

You have seen, that in the accomplishment of this salvation, the Lord Jesus hath assumed your nature, taken your name, acted as your Representative, became your Surety, and in all his Characters, and offices, hath obtained *eternal redemption for his people*. Having therefore lived and died for them; and for them having fully answered all the demands of his Father's righteous law; will he return to thwart his own designs? Did he once come to save, and will he now come to destroy?

Moreover; by virtue of covenant-engagements, and by Covenant-relations his people are part of himself. He that is to be your Judge; is your Brother, your Husband, your Friend. And what a sweet Scripture is that, which saith, *the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son, on this express account, because he is the Son of man.*

Carry therefore I beseech you, those precious views of the Lord Jesus, into all the circumstances,

ces, and transactions of life. Do not think it enough, to preserve the recollection of it, in seasons of holy ordinances only; but let it mingle, in all the events, which concern you. Let the sweet thought, perpetually cross the mind, both *in lying down, and in rising up when you sit in the house, and when you walk by the way*: that the Lord Jesus, your Jesus, who is soon coming, to gather his people to himself, and to take out of his kingdom, all things that offend, is coming, under all those endearing characters, in which you have already known him. He that hath now saved, will then come to glorify. Say as *Paul* did; *we look for the Saviour the Lord Jesus Christ.*

I cannot better fold up my Sermon, on a subject of this nature, than in the same words, with which the Apostle *Paul* endeavoured to comfort the minds of the Church, of the *Thessalonians* on a similar subject. *If we believe* (says he) *that Jesus died, and rose again; even so them also which sleep in Jesus, will God bring with him. For this we say unto you, by the word of the Lord: that we which are alive and remain, unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the Archangel, and with the trump of God, and the dead*

*dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words. **

* Thes. 4. 15.



From Philp's Press, Barrack-Street, Dock.

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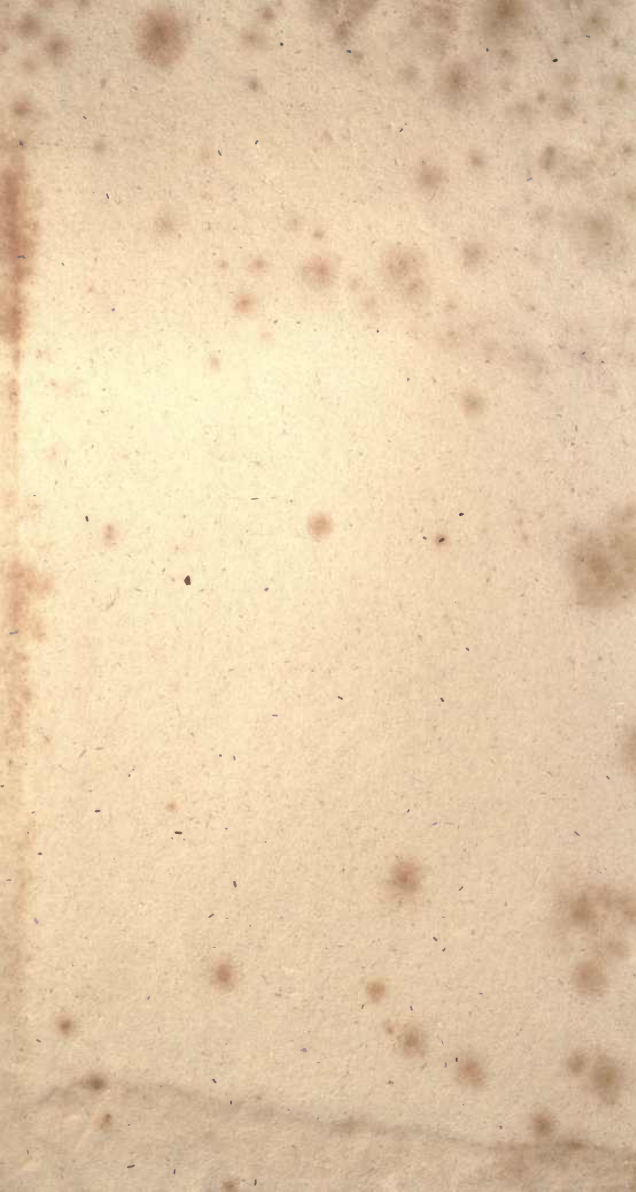
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